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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE

VENEZUELA
POST REPORT

November 1980

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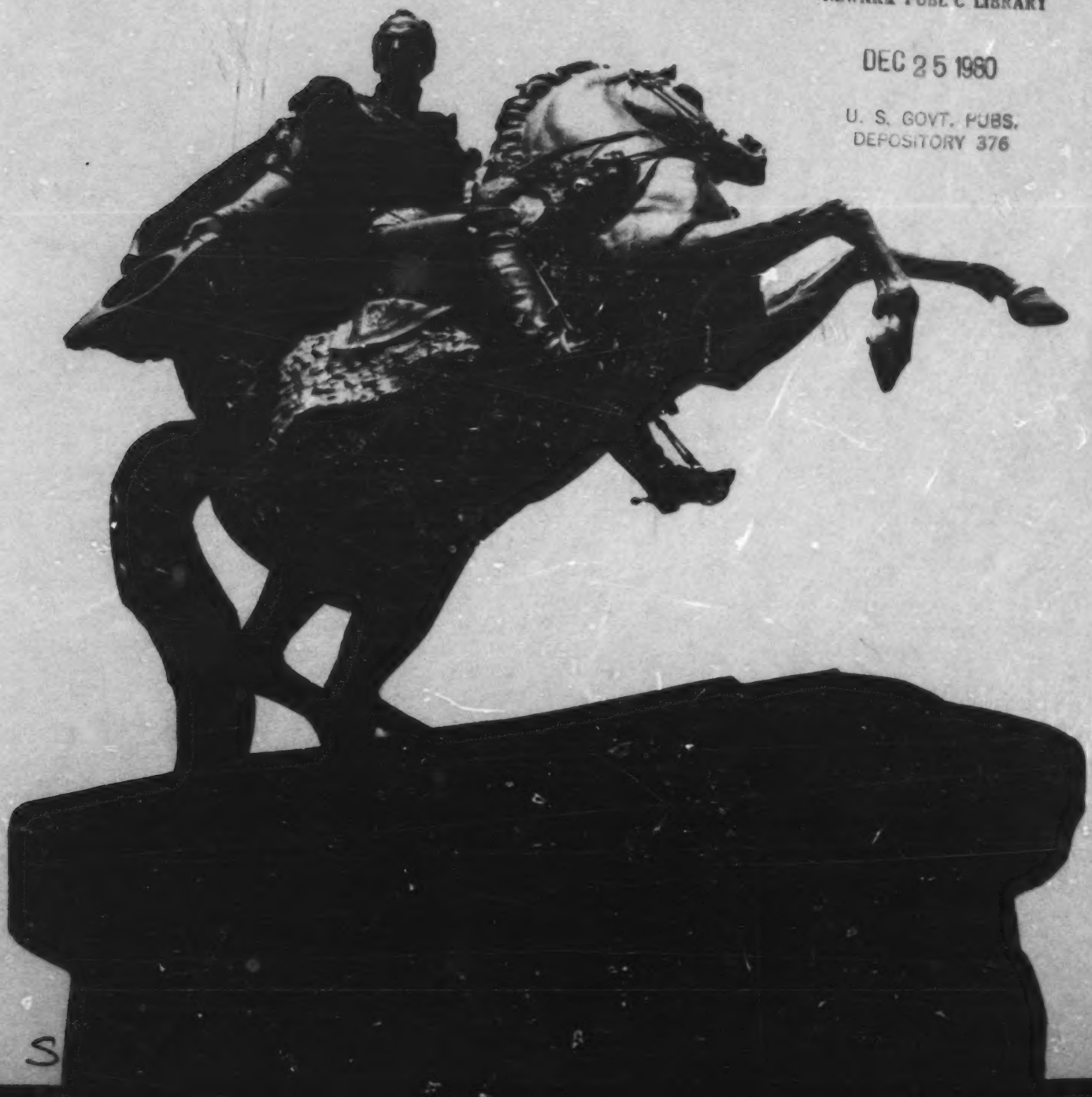

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Monument to the Precursores de la Independencia.

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PREFACE

Venezuela is important to the United States. Venezuelans have practiced democracy successfully since 1958, and their success could inspire others in Latin America. Moreover, Venezuela is a principle trading partner, ranking among the top eight markets for US exports. It traditionally has been a reliable supplier of petroleum products and currently is the third largest exporter to the US of oil and its derivatives. Caracas attracts attention from top US policymakers.

Caracas is crowded, noisy, jostling, and expensive. But it can be exciting, and close at hand are the rugged wilderness of the Avila Mountain range, the jewel-like Los Chorros park, and an early morning jog among a million tropical birds in Parque del Este. Weekend excursions include the desert of Falcon State, the high Andes, the mesa country of the east with the world's highest waterfall, and the still largely unexplored Amazon jungle. Venezuela has over 1,300 varieties of birds and extraordinary flora, including magnificent orchids.

Venezuela's varied beauty, strategic location, and natural resources, as well as its dynamic political and economic growth, combine to make a challenging and interesting tour.

This is the official post report prepared by the post. The information contained herein is directed to official US Government employees and their families. Any other information concerning the facts as set forth herein is to be regarded as unofficial information.

Cover: Statue of Simon Bolivar in the Plaza Bolivar.

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The Host Country

AREA, GEOGRAPHY, AND CLIMATE.

Venezuela is on the north coast of South America, between 0° 45′ and 0° 12′N, and 59° 45′ and 73° 09′W, and covers 352,150 square miles—about the size of Texas and Oklahoma combined.

The Orinoco River and the various mountain ranges, all branches of the Andes chain, divide the country into four distinct regions:

- South of the Orinoco River are the wild and largely unexplored Guyana Highlands, rich in mineral resources and developed and potential hydroelectric power. They are characterized by rugged relief and mesa-like formations. The climate ranges from temperate in the Gran Sabana to tropical on the plateau's fringes.
- North of the Orinoco are the "llanos" or plains. During the dry season (December–April) the entire area is almost desert-like. But during the rainy season, flooding rivers make the area muddy and practically impassable.
- Spurs of the Andes Montains run along each side of the Maracaibo basin and part of the seacoast. The bulk of Venezuela's population traditionally has lived in these highlands, attracted by the temperate weather and fertile soil.
- A tropical coastal plain stretches along most of Venezuela's 1,750-mile coastline. This narrow strip of land between mountains and sea widens in the west to form the Maracaibo basin. The climate is uniformly hot and humid.

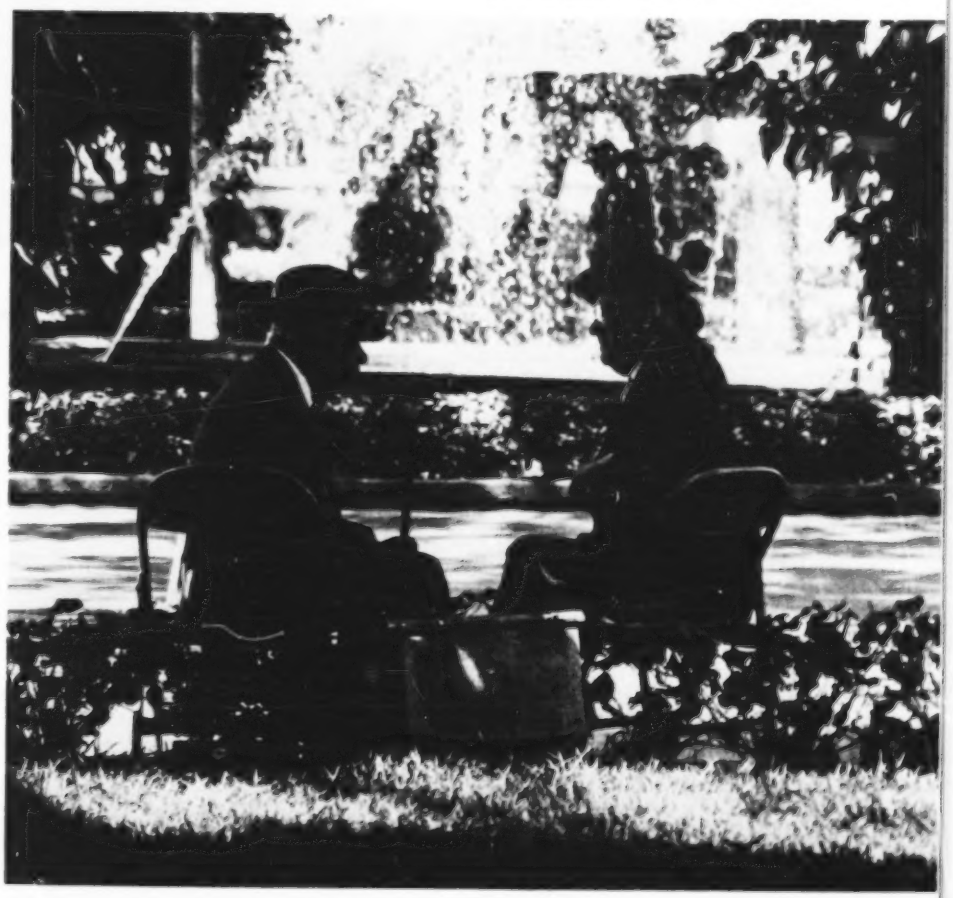
POPULATION

Venezuela's officially estimated population in 1979 was 13.5 million, although some experts believe illegal and uncounted immigration brings the figure to over 15 million. Population growth is estimated at over 3% per year. Over 40% of the population is under 15 years of age and 70% is under 30. Rapid population growth combined with heavy migration from farms to the city has produced densely populated cities while vast areas of the interior are sparsely populated. Only 25% of the population lives in rural areas, while 75% lives in urban areas.

Venezuela proudly regards itself as being "tri-ethnic," a fusion of three major races: South American Indian, Caucasian, and black. About 67% of the population is "mestizo" or mixed European; 10% black; 2% South American Indian, most of whom are in the back areas and have little contact with the modern world; and 21% Caucasian, of whom over 5% are recent immigrants.

Caracas is especially cosmopolitan ethnically. Perhaps a quarter of the city's population is comprised of immigrants and their descendants from Spain, Portugal, and Italy, most coming after World War II. Smaller numbers of immigrants from other Eastern and Western European countries play an important role in the city's commer-

Plaza Bolivar, a favorite spot for relaxation.



cial and professional life. The booming Venezuelan economy of recent years has attracted large immigration from the English- and Spanish-speaking Caribbean. Caracas has substantial exile communities from Argentina, Chile, and particularly Cuba.

Venezuela has an American community of 30,000, of whom about 10,000 reside in Caracas.

PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

Discovered by Columbus in 1498 on his third voyage to the New World, Venezuela was first explored by Alonso de Ojeda in 1499. According to legend, Ojeda named the country Venezuela (Little Venice) after seeing the Indians' houses on stilts in Lake Maracaibo. It was one of the first New World colonies to revolt against Spain (1810), but it was not until 1821 that independence was achieved. Francisco de Miranda began the task. It was completed by the great hero and statesman of Latin America, Simon Bolivar, Venezuela's national hero and native son.

Venezuela, together with what are now Colombia, Panama, and Ecuador, was part of the Union Gran Colombiana until 1830, when it separated and began its own existence as a sovereign state.

Until as recently as 1958, Venezuela's political history as an independent nation could be characterized as rule by a series of military dictators.

During General Juan Vicente Gomez' rule (1908–35), oil was discovered in the Maracaibo basin, and Venezuela changed from a poor, largely agrarian country to one of Latin America's richest nations.

The modern political forces set in motion by the new oil economy produced a brief experiment in democracy 1945–48, a military coup followed by a 10-year period of dictatorship under General Marcos Perez Jimenez, and finally the restoration of democracy in 1958. Since 1958 Venezuela has had five democratic elections. In three of those elections presidential power has changed from one political party to another, always peacefully. Past presidents are Romulo Betancourt from the Accion Democratica (AD) social democratic party, 1959–64; Raul Leoni (AD), 1964–69; Rafael Caldera from the social Christian COPEI party, 1969–74; and Carlos Andres Perez (AD), 1974–79.

The Congress building, Caracas.

In December 1978 Luis Herrera Campins of the COPEI party won election by over 200,000 votes. The dominant and moderate AD and COPEI parties won virtually equal representation in the Congress, between them gaining 96% of the Senate and 84% of the Chamber of Deputies. A number of other parties, most of them leftist, won 2 of the 47 Senate seats and 27 of the 199 seats in the Chamber of Deputies. In June 1980 elections for municipal councils, which for the first time were separated from national elections, COPEI won over 50% of seats throughout the country.

Venezuela is a representative democracy. The Constitution of 1961 provides for direct popular election of the president every 5 years. The president is chief of state and head of the national executive branch. There is no vice president. The president is assisted by cabinet members with the rank of minister. The president appoints the governors of the various states. State legislators and municipal councilpersons are elected locally.

The legislative branch consists of the Senate and a Chamber of Deputies. Senators and deputies are elected by popular vote through a complex system of proportional representation. They serve 5-year terms which coincide with the president's term.

The judicial branch consists of a Supreme Court and other courts on all different levels of government.

The Republic of Venezuela is composed of 20 states, two territories, and the Federal District, which includes much of the Caracas metropolitan area.

ARTS, SCIENCE, AND EDUCATION

Venezuelan cultural life is centered in Caracas. This reflects the largely urban society (over 75%), and the fact that one out of every five Venezuelans lives in Caracas. To accommodate this demographic shift, Caracas has added numerous cultural institutions in the past few years, and it is expected that 1981 will see the completion of an ambitious performing arts center, the Ateneo de Caracas. Additionally, building on the accomplishments of the previous government, the current administration has made a strong commitment to fostering and promoting culture and education, backing it up with significant state funding.

This is not to suggest neglect of other urban centers and regions of the country, however. The National Cultural Council (CONAC) gives labor project support and funding to regional efforts in all areas of the arts, while strongly encouraging local initiatives. The Zulian Cultural Council, for example, is extremely active in the promotion of the arts in Maracaibo and Zulia State. The regional development corporations, large state industries, and private foundations also foster and fund projects. Finally, various embassies sponsor touring performers, and the US-Venezuelan binational centers organize cultural programs.

To preserve and foster appreciation for traditional Venezuelan culture, the Venezuelan Institute of Folklore sponsors folklore festivals, regional fairs, and dance groups. These are often associated with local saints days. For example, a popular dance known as Los Diablos Danzantes de Yare (the Dancing Devils of Yare) is performed every year on Corpus Christi day. The village of Yare is only about 50 miles from Caracas. While this reflects Venezuela's African influence, other such events reflect the dominant Spanish influence on the country's rich folkloric tradition.

In Caracas, FUNDARTE (the municipal arts funding organization), along with some social service organizations, has begun an ambitious arts program, largely theater in the barrios surrounding the city.

Music plays an outstanding role in Caracas. Three major orchestras perform here, all with many US musicians, many recently graduated from music schools. The Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela, 50 years old in 1980, gives Sunday morning concerts in the Aula Magna of Central University. It contracts conductors and solo performing artists regularly, many from the US. The 1-year old Philharmonic Orchestra gives twice-weekly performances, but lacks a permanent home. And the new Municipal Orchestra is meant to accompany the Municipal Opera, the Caracas International Ballet, and visiting companies.

Additionally, an active Youth Orchestra has more than 25 "nucleos" around the country feeding it new talent each year. American artists are regularly contracted to conduct workshops for the Youth Orchestra. It performs in the Sala Jose Felix Rivas, the only completed performing hall in the Ateneo. Additionally, choral, chamber, folk, and popular music (indigenous and North American) are everywhere, and modern (vanguardia) music is increasingly popular.

The Caracas Metropolitan Opera has a regular season in May and June, performing the standard repertoire with a mixture of artists from its own opera school, as well as from Europe and the US. The opera school also gives workshop productions throughout the year, and independent entrepreneurs sponsor ad hoc performances. The Caracas Festival, now in its second year, also performs opera.

Ballet has received enormous stature and impetus with the world-renowned International Ballet of Caracas which has two regular seasons, spring and fall. Many experimental groups are being spawned, founded by Venezuelans trained abroad. Well-established ballet schools in Caracas and other major cities give recitals. Many accept non-Venezuelan students. The experimental dance group from the University of Zulia (LUZ) in Maracaibo publishes the country's only dance magazine.

Caracas is an active theater city with from 6 to 10 plays being performed at any given time. Experimental groups, university players, children's theater, a black theater group near Caracas (Teatro Negro de Barlovento), the well-established Caracas Players who perform in English, and a venerable tradition of puppetry also perform here. Caracas has an annual theater festival, and an occasional group visits from Europe or the US. The International Theater Institute (ITI) has an office in Caracas.

The plastic arts flourish in Venezuela. Strong local demand, particularly in modern art and sculpture; numerous influential private galleries with international connections; three major museums in Caracas, the Contemporary, the Fine Arts, the Gallery of National Art, plus others in provincial cities; improving University arts curricula; and a large, active arts community including many world famous artists, all contribute to this ferment. Jesus Soto, Carlos Cruz Diez, Hector Poleo, Alejandro Otero, Mercedes Pardo, and Cornelis Zitman are among Venezuela's best-known artists.

Scientific activity in the private sector is generally limited to instruction and some research, primarily in the social sciences. However, the government's National Council for Scientific and Technological Investigations (CONICIT) plays an increasing role in developing science and technology in Venezuela. The minister of state for science and technology is planning to organize several new research institutes to expand basic and applied research. They already exist at the Institute of Scientific Research (IVIC) and Institute for Petroleum Research (INTEVEP). A bilateral agreement in science and technology between the US and Venezuela signed in January 1980 provides the framework for mutually advantageous cooperative endeavors.

The educational system is patterned after European schools, with 6 years of primary schooling (primaria), 5 years of secondary education in the "liceos," and the universities.

The government, particularly since 1958, has made great progress in education, teacher-training, and school construction, with 14% of national expenditures now devoted to that sector. Sweeping programs to combat illiteracy have reduced it from 49% in 1950 to about 20% in 1980. Other government programs have concentrated on vocational and technical training. University education and facilities have also been expanded in recent years. Financial problems, overcrowding, and occasional leftist-inspired student unrest hinder development of university education.

COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

Venezuela is one of the wealthiest nations in the hemisphere; in 1978 its gross domestic product (GDP) was $39.6 billion, amounting to about $3,000 per capita, the highest in Latin America.

Petroleum has been the cornerstone of Venezuela's economy for over 50 years. The petroleum industry accounts for 95% of export earnings, over 60% of government revenues, and 25% of GDP. Venezuela is the world's third largest supplier (ranking behind Saudi Arabia and Nigeria) of petroleum to the US when indirect exports to the US via Caribbean refineries are included. Venezuela produced an average of 2.35 million barrels of oil a day in 1979 and exported about 85% of this. Venezuela is one of the founding members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, and has benefited greatly from recent price increases.

Iron ore, from huge deposits in the Guyana region of eastern Venezuela, and bauxite, from which the exploitation of substantial reserves is creating a fully integrated aluminum industry, are other contributors to Venezuela's prosperity. Aside from petroleum, iron ore, aluminum, coffee, cacao, and some precious metals provide export earnings.

In contrast to the highly concentrated pattern of Venezuela's exports, the internal economy is quite diversified. A number of small- and medium-sized industries have grown to provide the products needed by a burgeoning local market for consumer goods. In the early 1960s Venezuela fostered programs of foreign and domestic investment in the automobile, tire, and food production industries to reduce consumer goods imports. Venezuela's approach to foreign investment has become more restrictive in line with general Andean Pact policy. The Herrera administration has sought to make domestic industry more competitive, lifting many price controls and reducing some tariff duties. The public sector's share of economic activity has gradually risen from 25% of aggregate demand in 1974 to 30% in 1978, and now accounts for over 40% of GNP.

In 1978 Venezuela imported goods worth $10.4 billion. The US, besides being Venezuela's largest customer, is also its largest supplier with about 40% of the market. Venezuela is the 8th largest export market for the US. Principal imports include machinery, transportation equipment, semimanufactures, and food. Although Venezuela is trying to become more self-sufficient agriculturally, food imports are 40–45% of consumption, of which the US has about a 40% market share.

TRANSPORTATION

Automobiles

The primary highway system is good, though often poorly marked, particularly in residential areas of cities. All major routes and connecting roads are paved. Mountain roads and some main roads suffer from landslides and washouts during the rainy season. Gas stations and garages can be found throughout the country.

A car is essential in Caracas. Walking is difficult, except in parks. Traffic is usually extremely heavy both during the week and on weekends leaving the city. Parking is difficult, particularly in older sections, but many areas of the city have parking garages. Bicycles and motorbikes are not safe due to steep hills and heavy traffic. Most apartment buildings provide lockable parking for their tenants. Since many Venezuelan drivers drive aggressively, one must drive defensively to avoid collisions. Traffic moves on the right.

Although some people who live near the Embassy do not have cars, a car is highly recommended for all. Public transportation is not adequate, especially for recreation and shopping. Due to heavy traffic and scarce parking, compact or medium-sized cars are most suitable. A simple, easily serviced car is best. Both Ford and General Motors assemble a variety of models in Venezuela. It can be difficult to obtain parts for cars not assembled here. Prices of most automobile parts and repair services are significantly higher than in the US. Four-wheel drive vehicles are popular with those who often travel outside Caracas, allowing access to less crowded beaches and secluded places where roads are unpaved. Air-conditioning is recommended.

The Chief of Mission may import up to two personal vehicles every 3 years, one of which must be a make and model assembled in Venezuela. These vehicles can only be sold or transferred after they have been in the country 3 years or if the Ambassador is transferred. The amount of tax to be paid if a vehicle is sold is computed on a sliding percentage scale.

Other diplomatic personnel and career consular officers may import and sell one motor vehicle of any make or model every 3 years or at time of transfer, provided the US cost of the vehicle does not exceed $9,000 for a normal passenger vehicle and $12,000 for a four-wheel drive vehicle (base retail sticker cost, excluding extra optional equipment, taxes, and destination charges). Corresponding customs duties or taxes on a sliding percentage scale must be paid at the time the vehicle is sold.

Nondiplomatic personnel (administrative and technical personnel) of the Mission may import and sell only one vehicle of a type and model made in Venezuela, provided the vehicle is imported in Venezuela within 6 months of arrival. Again, a graduated tax must be paid at the time the vehicle is sold. All nondiplomatic personnel should request and obtain previous written clearance from post before shipping any vehicle. The Venezuelan Government issues a list of all approved models, and only models which conform 100% may be imported.

Gas is much cheaper than in the US. High-octane gas and excellent oil are sold in all filling stations. Service station attendants expect tips.

Nonleaded gasoline is not sold in Venezuela. Therefore, remove catalytic converters in the US if possible. Also remove tools, mirrors, radios, cigarette lighters, windshield wipers, hubcaps, stereo equipment, easily removed speak-

ers, and other removable parts and ship separately whenever possible.

Bring spare parts, especially special or fast-wearing parts, as local spare parts are costly and repair work is expensive. All personnel accredited to the host government, both diplomatic and nondiplomatic, are not charged for vehicle license plates or registration. Drivers licenses are also free of charge on presentation of a valid drivers license.

Holders of a current US or other valid drivers license or international drivers license are permitted to drive with these documents for 1 year from date of arrival.

All drivers must have Venezuelan third-party liability insurance. Minimum third-party insurance costs about US$90 yearly. Comprehensive and collision coverage, with a deductible, costs between US$200 and $600 a year, depending on the make and size of the automobile and number of cylinders. Unless your entire car is stolen you do not get paid for any stolen parts.

To import and register a privately owned vehicle with the Venezuelan Vehicle Registration Office, the Embassy needs the title and **original** bill of sale.

Maracaibo. A comfortable, reliable automobile is both a necessity and a pleasure in Maracaibo. Automobiles should be shipped through the US Despatch Agent directly to Maracaibo, consigned to the American Consulate. Shipping cars has, so far, presented few problems. Some vehicles have experienced minor pilferage and other damage while in the port area. Service and parts are available for most Chevrolet, Ford, and AMC products, as well as for some Fiat, Renault, Volkswagen, and four-wheel drive Toyota models. Experiences with repair work have varied from pretty good to terrible. Unless you are a competent home mechanic, you should bring a late-model, low-mileage car to Maracaibo. Check with post before bringing a car without a local dealership.

Motorcycles, though convenient, are not recommended in Maracaibo due to the high incidence of traffic accidents, the hot weather and dust, and theft.

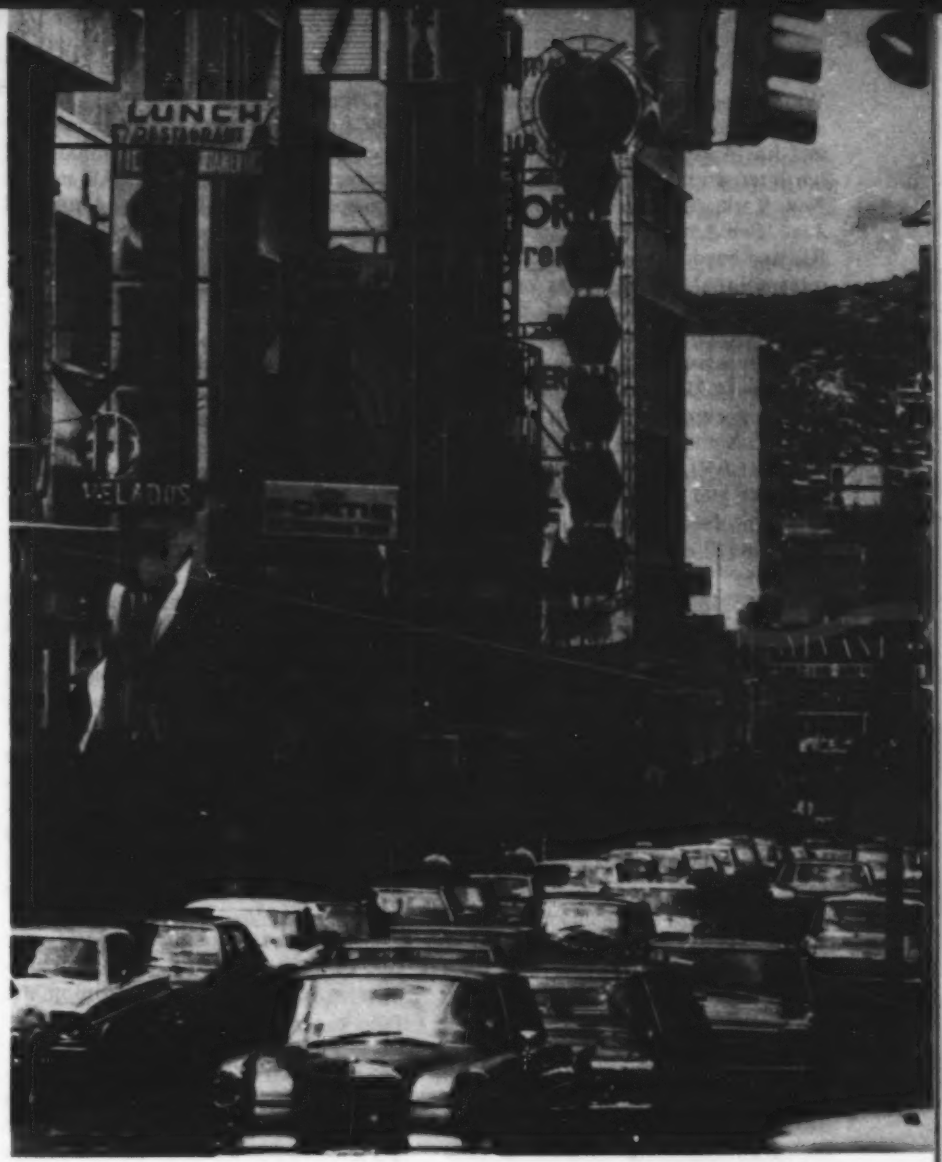
Local

Public transportation in Caracas consists of buses, taxis, and collective taxis (por puestos). All are overcrowded during morning, noon, and evening rush hours. Buses are rarely used by Americans, as they are slow and not always clean or comfortable. Por puestos, which are cheap (47¢ and up) and travel fixed routes, are quite dependable.

Taxis can be found on most main streets although they are scarce during rush hours. Several taxi companies have dispatcher service.

Fares are comparable to Washington, DC. The price should be agreed upon before entering the cab as meters are not used, although they will supposedly be required sometime in 1980. Tips are not expected. Prices increase at night, during the holiday seasons, and for out-of-town destinations. Take a map along, since many drivers do not know the city well.

Fares in Maracaibo are high, and taxis rarely cruise. Instead, stands are at all points such as the airport and main hotels.



Avenida Urdaneta in the center of Caracas.

International and Regional

All commercial flights, both domestic and international, use Maiquetia Airport, some 15 miles from Caracas. Pan Am has daily flights to New York,

READER'S DIGEST

Washington (via New York), and Miami and several times a week to San Juan and Los Angeles. VIASA, the Venezuelan international airline, has flights to New York, Miami, Houston, and San Juan. Pan Am provides service south to Rio and beyond, and VIASA and other international airlines offer service to other Latin American and European cities. On June 1, 1980, Braniff began biweekly service from New Orleans–Houston to Maracaibo–Caracas.

The two national airlines, AVENSA and Linea Aeropostal Venezolana (LAV), serve Venezuela's principal cities and many outlying areas not accessible by road. Both airlines have jet service between Caracas and other Venezuelan cities.

Reservations to and from the US, particularly during summer, Christmas, and Easter, are difficult to obtain on short notice. Personnel planning to arrive during those periods should request reservations well in advance.

Venezuela has only a few short stretches of railroad, mainly freight, and a passenger line between Barquisimeto and Puerto Cabello. A national network of buses is also available.

COMMUNICATIONS

Telephone and Telegraph

Local telephone service is generally reliable, although calling from one section of Caracas to another may be difficult, especially during the rainy season. Long-distance calls within Venezuela may be dialed directly. Some sections of Caracas have direct dialing to the US and such calls take little time. Operator assisted calls can cause delays of up to several hours.

Radio-telegraph service between the US and Venezuela is good. Local telegrams within Venezuela, however, are unreliable and sometimes slower than regular mail.

Maracaibo. In general, the information provided for Caracas applies to Maracaibo as well. The rules governing APO use should be carefully reviewed.

Telephones are expensive, and you can expect a long wait for installation. You will be fortunate to find living quarters with a telephone already installed.

Mail and Pouch

The Embassy's APO should be used for sending and receiving all personal mail, magazines, and packages. All mail is transported by air between Miami and Caracas. Venezuelan domestic and international mail is slow and unreliable.

The APO address is:

Name
American Embassy
APO Miami 34037

The USMILGP address is

Name
US Military Group, Venezuela
APO Miami 34037

Packages must not weigh more than 70 pounds or exceed 72 inches in length and girth combined.

US postage stamps are used on all mail and may be purchased at the APO.

The following items may not be mailed to or from Caracas by APO: cigarettes and other tobacco products; firearms of any type; fruits, animals, and living plants; meats, including preserved meats, whether sealed or not; and liquor.

Mail sent through the APO may not be registered, and personal packages may not be sent by diplomatic pouch.

Maracaibo. All personal mail, magazines, and packages may be sent through APO. Address mail as though you were assigned to the Embassy in Caracas, as follows:

Name
American Embassy (indicate Agency)
APO Miami 34037

The mail destined for personnel assigned to Maracaibo is segregated and pouched to the Consulate at intervals during the week.

Radio and TV

Caracas has four national television networks. The two privately owned commercial stations and one of the government channels offer many slightly dated US TV series dubbed in Spanish, as well as locally produced prime-time "telenovelas" (soap operas) and musical, variety, and comedy programs. The government also runs a noncommercial cultural station which features a range of quality programing similar to US educational television. Old US feature films, dubbed in Spanish, are shown frequently on the commercial stations.

All programing originates in Caracas and is broadcast throughout most of the country via 40 relay stations. Venezuela has a satellite ground station which receives and broadcasts international programs by INTELSAT. World Series baseball, the Superbowl, and other American sporting events have been shown by satellite in recent years.

Color television (NTSC North American system) has recently been inaugurated in Venezuela. Currently, only the cultural station has full-time color programing. However, the other three channels, which now broadcast color transmissions on a limited basis, plan to begin full-time color programing during summer of 1980.

Caracas' many radio stations broadcast both traditional Latin American and popular US music. Radio Libertador, a local station, broadcasts a 1½ hour nightly program in English featuring a UPI news roundup, financial reports, and US sports news. A government-owned station, Radio Nacional, offers classical music from morning to midnight. There is also one FM/stereo "good music" station in Venezuela. Reception of VOA, Armed Forces, and BBC broadcasts is fairly good in Caracas.

Newspapers, Magazines, and Technical Journals

Caracas has a lively and competitive press. Caracas has seven daily newspapers. Three are important sources of information and opinion. They are *El Nacional*, a liberal newspaper; *El Universal*, a conservative and business-oriented newspaper; and the recently established *El Diario de Caracas*, which features in-depth news analysis and cultural features for a select and influential readership. Caracas also has an English-language paper, the *Daily Journal*, which publishes articles by prominent American columnists and uses wire-service stories as a principal source of its news stories. In addition, the *New York Times*, *Miami Herald*, and the *Wall Street Journal* are received in Caracas a day or two after publication and may

be subscribed to locally. Some 20 magazines are published in Caracas, including 4 weekly news magazines: *Autentico, Resumen, Semana,* and *Zeta. Bohemia* and *Elite* are both popular feature magazines.

The Centro Venezolano-Americano in Caracas maintains a lending library and reading room with English- and Spanish-language books and most popular American magazines. An excellent English-language circulating library can be joined for a small fee. The British Cultural Center has a library of English works.

Although many book and magazine shops in Caracas carry English-language books and magazines, prices are substantially higher than in the US. Subscriptions for magazines and periodicals should be ordered from the US. *Time, Newsweek,* and some US newspapers are available by local subscriptions or at the newsstands.

Maracaibo. *Panorama* is Maracaibo's principal newspaper. The English-language *Daily Journal* comes from Caracas. The *New York Times, Wall Street Journal,* and the *Miami Herald* are on the larger newsstands, but prices range up to 400% higher than in the US. The Centro Venezolano Americano del Zulia (CEVAZ) receives the *New York Times* which is circulated among the staff.

CEVAZ also maintains a library. A few clubs have libraries for their members. Newsstands sell popular American magazines and a limited selection of paperbacks. Prices are 200% above those in the US. Subscribe to the journals you want to take regularly. No bookstore stocks a large variety of English-language books.

HEALTH AND MEDICINE

Medical Facilities

Caracas has many highly respected general practitioners and specialists of all types, many of whom have had US training and can speak English. The Embassy provides all personnel with a health and medical information booklet listing recommended doctors by specialty. Several clinics organized by groups of doctors include facilities similar to well-equipped hospitals in the US. The one most commonly used is across the street from the Embassy. Laboratory work and tests are generally more expensive than in the US, and the quality of nursing care is below US standards.

Caracas also has a number of US-trained dentists, but dental care is generally expensive. Have necessary dental work done before coming to post.

Most medical problems can be solved at the post. In exceptional cases medical travel is authorized, generally to Gorgas Hospital in Panama.

Hospital medical insurance (one of the programs available to Foreign Service personnel) to fill the "Protection Gap" is recommended to cover outpatient treatment, which is expensive and not covered by the Department's medical program.

A part-time contract nurse is on duty at the Embassy Health Unit to minister to the needs of Mission personnel and their dependents. A regional medical officer (RMO) stationed in Bogota visits the post about once a quarter. When the RMO is not at post, the Embassy uses the services of a post medical adviser whose office is located across the street from the Embassy in a modern hospital.

The Health Unit maintains a small supply of common medicines and drugs for acute illnesses. If you require particular medicines on a regular basis, bring a supply with you.

Lenses and frames for glasses are expensive, sometimes three times as much as comparable replacements in the US, so bring an extra pair of prescription lenses. Check with the Embassy nurse for a recommended source of distilled water for soft contact lenses. The distilled water sold in pharmacies is often impure.

In Maracaibo all of the usual medical facilities are available, though the system of fixed appointments is not common. Several large medical centers and hospitals, as well as a large university hospital, are available. Many Venezuelans prefer to go to the US for major diagnostic or medical treatment.

Community Health

Since 1936, a national health program has made Venezuela the largest malaria-free tropical area in the world. Many other diseases, once endemic to the country, have been controlled in a similar manner.

Although upper and middle class health standards are good, overall health conditions suffer from poor sanitation in the shack communities that surround the cities.

Amebiasis and other intestinal problems, such as diarrhea caused by viruses, bacteria, or worms and parasites, are common.

The dry and sunny climate in Caracas favors some allergy sufferers. However, the altitude, climate, and prevalence of tropical pollens during all seasons have aggravated asthma and hay fever conditions. The frequency of respiratory infections such as colds is similar to that in the US.

Preventive Measures

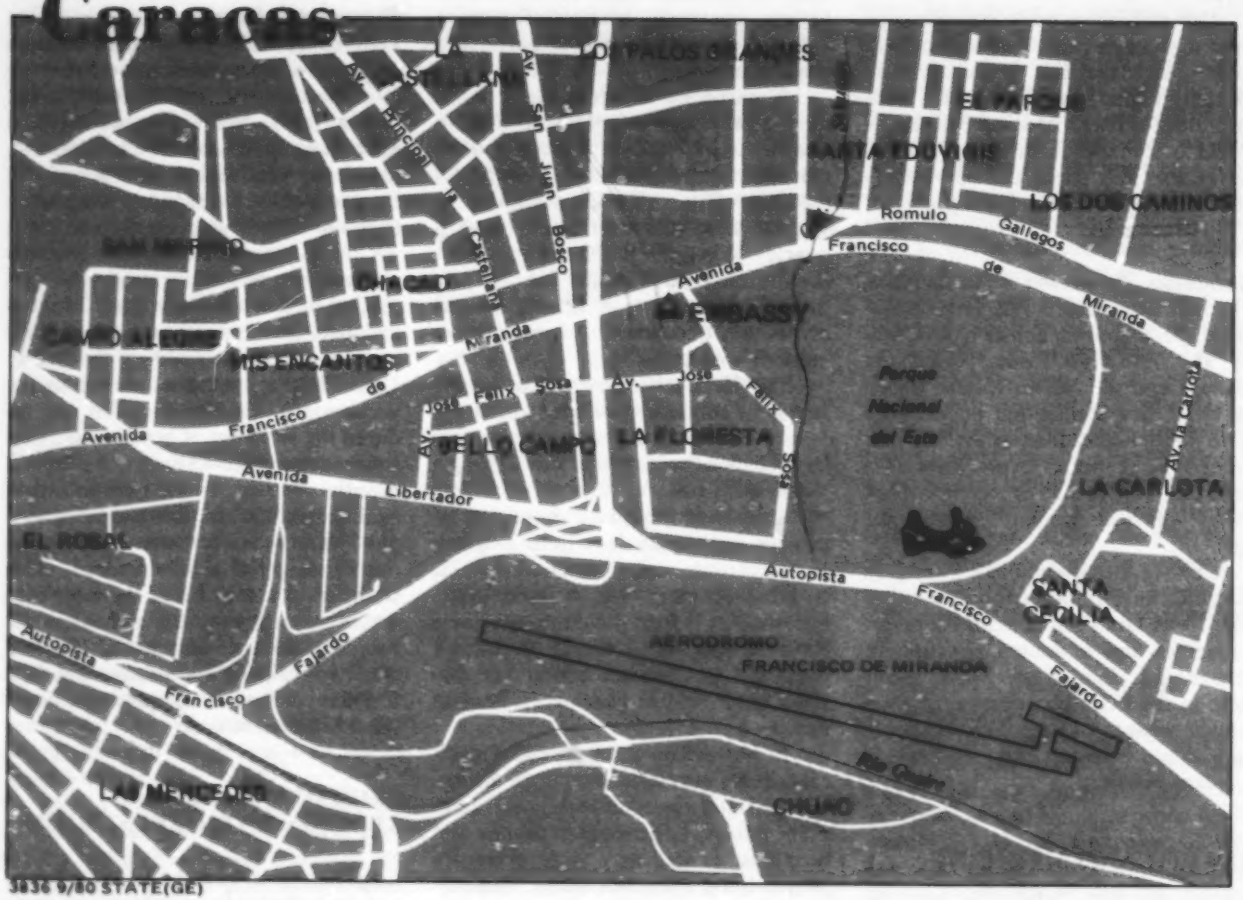
Venezuelan health authorities no longer require smallpox vaccination for entry into the country. Yellow fever is not present in the city of Caracas but does exist along the Colombian border. Yellow fever vaccination is required for entry into many of the surrounding countries and islands. Because the vaccine is not carried in our Health Unit and it is inconvenient to obtain locally, be vaccinated before arriving at post. Typhoid and tetanus immunizations are recommended and are available in the Health Unit. Cholera and typhus are considered unnecessary. Gamma globulin has reduced the incidence of hepatitis and personnel are advised to have shots every 3 months. Pre-exposure immunization against rabies is also recommended.

The city's faulty water pumping system has resulted in interruptions of the water supply in much of the city. Tapwater is not always safe and should be boiled before consumption. Bottled water is available and inexpensive. The Embassy maintains an up-to-date list of reliable distributors.

EMPLOYMENT FOR SPOUSES AND DEPENDENTS

Employment opportunities for spouses and dependents are available in the commissary, the APO, and with US Government Agencies attached to the Mission. Also, qualified substitute teachers are needed at the American schools.

Venezuelan laws make full-time work on the local economy virtually impossible. A work permit is required and is not issued to spouses or dependents who are officially attached to the Mission. A spouse or dependent would have to relinquish his/her official or diplomatic passport in order to obtain a work permit.



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American Embassy

CARACAS

Caracas occupies a garden-like valley rimmed by the majestic Avila Mountains which form a rugged barrier between the valley and the Caribbean. It is the political, cultural, and economic center of Venezuela.

Its architecture is a mixture of colonial and modern styles. In the older, western part of the city, much of the Old World Spanish colonial charm has been retained. To the east are the newer areas, characterized by skyscrapers and freeways with modern, comfortable residential areas dotting the valley floor and spreading up the mountainsides.

The climate is mild because of the almost 3,000-foot elevation. Justifiably, the Caraquenos (Caracas natives) refer to Caracas as "the city of the eternal spring." Caracas has a mean average temperature of 71°F. Daytime temperatures range from 65° to 80° during the dry season to a maximum of 80° to 90° during the hot parts of summer's rainy season. Nights are cool and pleasant year round. Winter temperatures have even dropped to the low 50s.

The parks and gardens surrounding modern homes are rich in tropical flowers and greenery. Streets are lined with palm, mango, and many flowering trees.

The eastern part of the city, where the Embassy is located, has many familiar American features: major arteries ablaze with neon signs advertising US products; large, well-stocked supermarkets and department stores; modern air-conditioned theaters showing the latest American films; and soda fountains and drive-in restaurants. Late-model American cars literally jam the streets and nearly every home displays a TV antenna to receive one of the four Spanish-language TV stations.

The American appearance is superficial: Caracas is a distinctively Latin city. The dominant culture is Spanish with the vitality and zest of a Caribbean orientation to the world. The combination is not Venezuelan, but Caraqueno.

Caracas has the amenities of a large, cosmopolitan city. It boasts several excellent restaurants, a good selection of movies, and a variety of theatrical and musical productions. The city has many nightclubs and discotheques, a concert and symphony series, several museums, a thriving art market, a park/zoo, and an ultramodern racetrack.

The American community in the Caracas consular district totals around 15,000. Most are with US firms and are active in the social and economic life of Caracas.

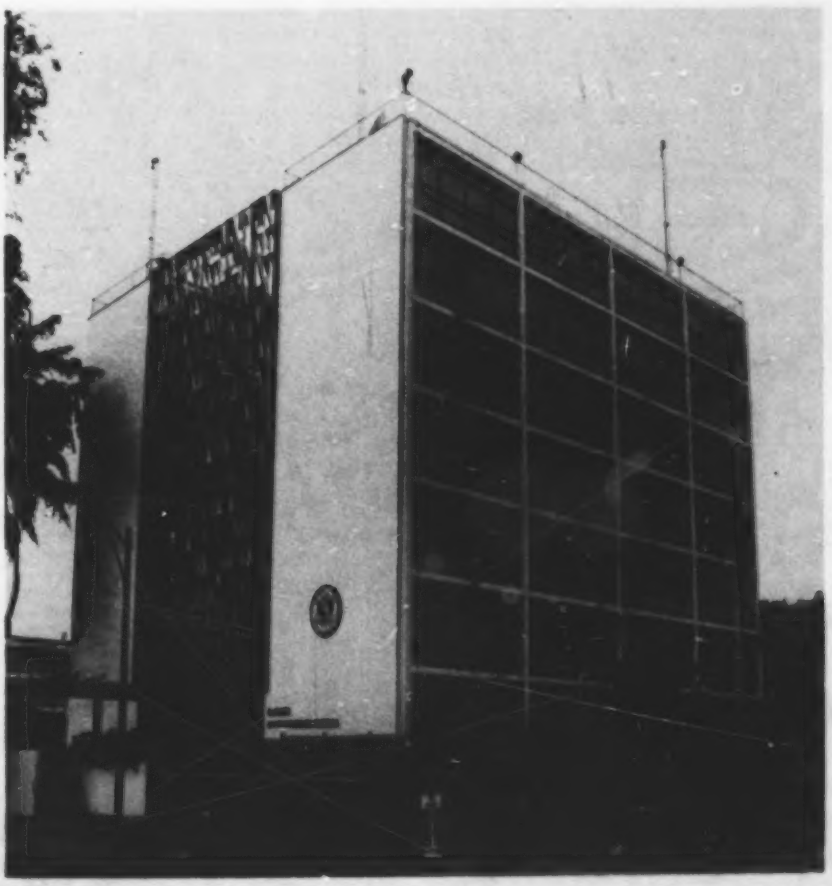
THE POST AND ITS ADMINISTRATION

The Ambassador, as Chief of Mission, has responsibility for the programs of all US Agencies in Venezuela.

The Embassy is divided into political, economic/commercial, consular, and administration divisions, each charged with responsibility for a segment of the overall country objectives.

The PAO directs USICA activities. USICA goals are to foster a better understanding of US policies and to emphasize the mutuality of interest between

US Embassy, Caracas.



the people of Venezuela and the US. USICA also arranges seminars, lectures, and cultural programs and is responsible for administering educational and cultural exchanges between Venezuela and the US.

In cooperation with USICA, the Binational Center (Centro Venezolano-Americano) runs a program of English- and Spanish-language courses. The Centro also presents cultural programs of Venezuelan and American art, exhibits, lectures, and music. A Binational Center in Maracaibo is called Centro Venezolano-Americano de Zulia.

Army, Air Force, and Navy attaches have offices in the Embassy. The present Defense attache also represents the Air Force.

The Military Group is divided into three sections. The Military Group commander maintains an office near the Venezuelan Ministry of Defense at Fuerte Tiuna, El Valle, telephone 61-43-01 and 61-84-68. Addresses of the three sections are:

Army: Fuerte Tiuna
El Valle
(Telephone 62-03-44 and 62-05-63)

Navy: Comandancia General de la Marina
Av. Vollmer, San Bernardino
(Telephone 52-09-20)

Air Force: Comandancia General de la Aviacion
Base Aerea Generalisimo Francisco de Miranda
La Carlota
(Telephone 36-26-94)

The Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service maintains an office in the Embassy's main building.

The Inter-American Geodetic Survey (IAGS), together with the Venezuelan National Mapping Service, is engaged in mapping projects in the interior. The office address is:

Edificio Camejo, 2do. Piso
Avenida Este 6
Centro Simon Bolivar
(Telephone 42-98-20 to 29, Ext. 350, 351, and 352)

The IRS maintains a regional office in the Embassy's Annex building, and the Drug Enforcement Agency maintains a district office in the main building. A detachment of Marines under a senior NCOIC is assigned to the Embassy.

Autopista, through the heart of Caracas.

The Embassy complex is composed of two modern buildings joined by a parking lot. The main building houses the offices of the Chancery, the Defense attache, the Drug Enforcement Agency, and the agricultural counselor. The Consulate, USICA, IRS, and the administrative offices are in the Annex. The Embassy is located at:

Avenida Francisco de Miranda y
Avenida Principal de la Floresta
Urb. La Floresta
(Telephone 284–6111 and
284–7111)

Office hours are 8 am to 5 pm with an hour for lunch, Monday through Friday. A Marine Guard and a duty officer are on duty at all times. The Mission observes all legal US and Venezuelan holidays.

You will be met by a member of your Agency if your arrival time is known in advance. Taxis are also available for the trip to Caracas from Maiquetia International Airport. Fares are usually Bs80 during the day and increase to Bs85 at night. Settle the fare when the taxi is engaged. Tipping is not expected. The 15-mile trip up the "autopista" to Caracas is a spectacular drive.

The Embassy's administrative division provides a full range of administrative support services (handling of checks and other fiscal matters, personnel services, travel, requisitioning, customs clearance, building maintenance, etc.) to all Agencies of the US Mission.

The American Embassy Employees' Association operates a small commissary selling liquor, cigarettes, and small specialty items. Membership is open to all US Mission personnel. A deposit of $100 is required to join and is refundable at time of departure. The Association periodically coordinates dry food orders from the US and Europe. The only frozen foods imported from the US (usually once a year) are turkeys, ham, and cheese. The Association also operates a snackbar and lounge in the Annex.

The US Mission Recreation Association is open to all US and national employees of the Embassy. It arranges social events and tours to various parts of Venezuela and the Caribbean.

HOUSING

Temporary Quarters

Temporary lodging can be arranged in one of the several residential hotels (El Cid, Montserrat, Continental Altamira, Contemporary) within walking distance of the Embassy and a large shopping center. The Anauco Hilton in the Parque Central complex, a contemporary residential hotel which has fully equipped apartments with up to 4 bedrooms, is preferable for larger families. The Anauco requires transportation to and from the Embassy but offers the most complete facilities, including a shopping mall on the lower levels. During late summer and early fall enough families are there so that shared cab or car transport to and from the Embassy is feasible. Transportation to school is provided when adequate school bus service is not available.

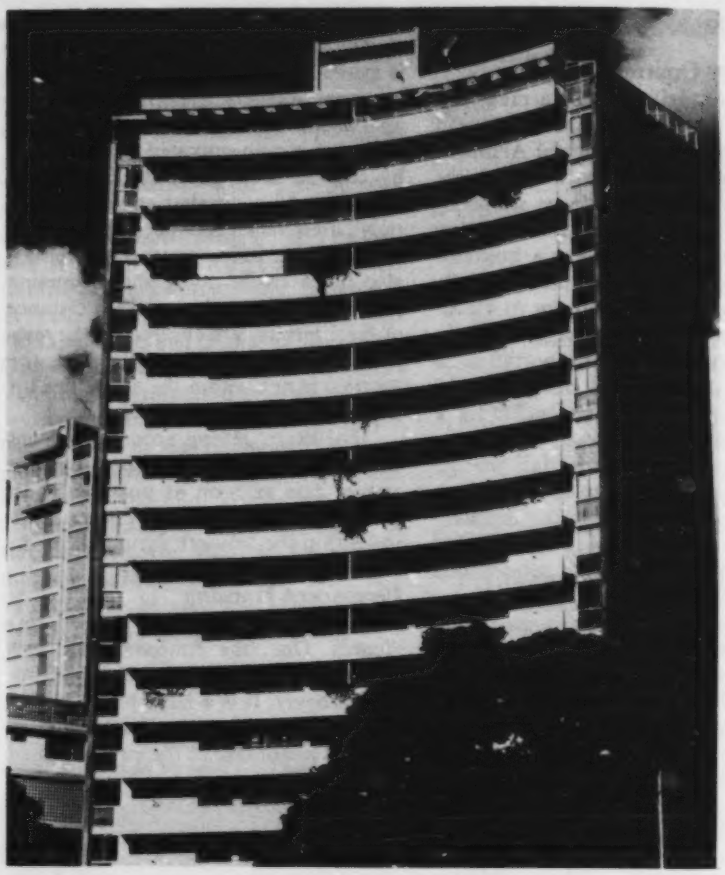
Survival kits can be provided upon request. The El Cid and Contemporary apartments have equipped kitchens, including dishes and tableware. Small electric appliances—iron, percolator, toaster, etc.—are not provided. The Anauco provides no tableware or dishes but has major appliances. Daily maid service, linen, and towels are included at all hotels, and laundry service is available but expensive. The Anauco provides washers and dryers in each apartment. For those hotels near the Embassy, a coin-operated laundry close by can be used, although it is often crowded and somewhat expensive. The only hotels which take pets are the Anauco and the Montserrat. The Anauco also has a tennis court and swimming pool. All hotels within walking distance of the Embassy are covered by the temporary lodging allowance but the Anauco is not within the allowance for single personnel.

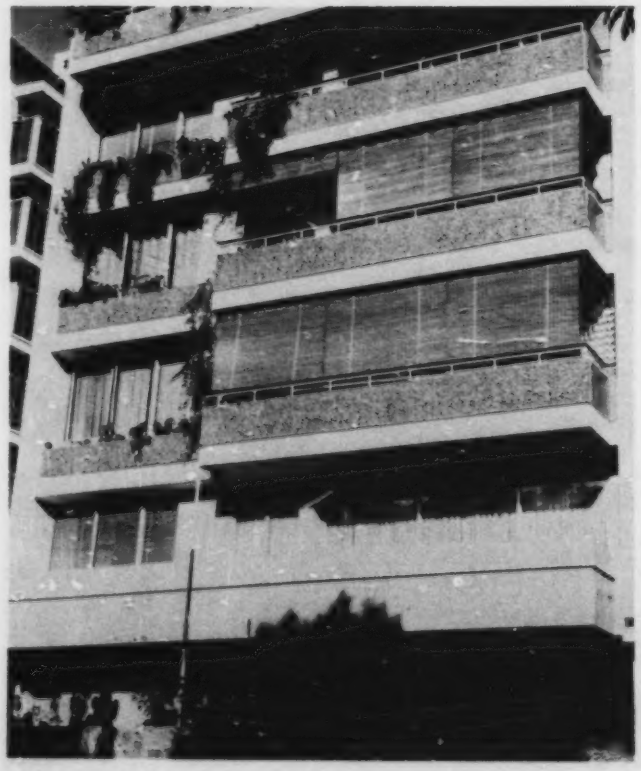
To insure getting accommodations of your choice notify the post of your arrival date as soon as possible. Most people are able to find appropriate housing within the 3-month period allowed.

Permanent Housing

The US Government owns two residences. One, the Ambassador's residence, is about a 20-minute drive from the Embassy. It is a large house with a long, spacious, covered terrace and magnificent panorama of the city. It is used

View from the Ambassador's residence.





Above and left: Typical staff housing.

year round for official entertaining. It is fully furnished except for a library and objects d'art.

Due to the hillside location, the grounds are not large. A swimming pool has been opened recently to Embassy personnel three mornings a week and all day Saturday. Photographs are available at the FBO.

The other government-owned residence (for the DCM) is located on the opposite side of the Valley, about 15 minutes (more with traffic) from the Embassy. The residence is fully furnished.

Counselors of Embassy are entitled to unfurnished residences under government leases. Furnished or semifurnished residences under government lease are provided for the agricultural counselor, PAO, IO, CAO, and certain other senior officers. Furnished quarters are also provided for the NCOIC and Marine Guard detachment.

Private housing and apartments, although expensive, can be found within or close to allowances comparable to other posts. Allowances are frequently raised to meet rising costs. The new arrival may have a heavy initial cash outlay until increases occur. And you may have to pay $1,000–$2,000 for rent in advance which will be recovered only at the end of the tour of duty. The FLO coordinator or the Embassy housing adviser can give you current figures on predictable out-of-pocket expenses.

Housing generally meets US standards in terms of lighting, ventilation, and comfort. Both the administrative section and FLO have contacts with rental agents and landlords and can be of assistance to newcomers. The most convenient areas for Embassy personnel, especially single persons, are Altamira, Santa Eduvigis, Los Palos Grandes, La Floresta, and La Castellana, all of which are within either walking or short driving distance of the Embassy.

Housing suitable for families can be found in nice neighborhoods close to the Embassy. However, due to increasing traffic and noise in these areas, many Embassy families are now choosing to live in suburbs such as Prados del Este, Cumbres de Curumo, Santa Monica, and Bello Monte. Housing in the newer, outlying suburbs tends to rent for less, but these areas require commuting (carpools are common), and, in a few areas, school bus service is not

provided. Check such services when you are house or apartment hunting.

Caracas is fast becoming a city of high rise buildings, and apartments are being constructed in all parts of the city and suburbs. Many apartments near the Embassy have been completed within the past 10 years and tend to be modern, clean, and attractive. Although they are small by US standards and may have little storage space, suitable, unfurnished 2- and 3-bedroom apartments for single personnel are available within allowances. Small, furnished apartments also are available close to the Embassy, but usually at rates above existing allowances. Furnishings often do not suit American tastes. Four-bedroom apartments suitable for families are expensive and are not readily available close to the Embassy. Family-sized furnished apartments are difficult to find and are expensive.

The majority of Embassy families live in houses (quintas). They are usually Spanish-colonial or modern in style and can be quite lovely. These 1- or 2-story masonry and concrete structures have many of the features of an American house plus servants quarters. Older and smaller quintas may lack adequate storage space. Furnished houses can also be found, but they are less readily available and much more expensive.

Caracas has a high burglary rate, and unattended homes are choice targets. A live-in maid for security is highly advisable. Apartments can be managed without maids, but they are not necessarily more secure than houses. Additional security may be provided by a dog or security devices.

Most real estate agents charge half a month's rent as commission, so check with the Administrative Section before house or apartment hunting on your own with local agents. A diplomatic clause must be included in every lease to permit an employee to cancel if necessary without penalty. Before signing a lease consult with the GSO to be certain all required clauses are included.

Furnishings

Bring personal effects, and unless furnished government housing is provided, plan to bring your own furniture. Any type of furniture and rugs is suitable, as the climate is consistently mild. Insects can be controlled. Some houses and apartments may have mold and mildew problems during the rainy season. Products are available locally to install in closets and storage areas to keep them dry.

Experience has shown it most convenient and practical to initially ship under the weight allowance and then order necessary additional furnishings from the US after finding suitable quarters. Small items can be obtained quickly through the APO. Larger items can be shipped under government orders up to the limit of your weight allowance for 6 months to 1 year after arrival, depending on your diplomatic status. Used items are advertised in the local papers by departing American families, but prices are usually higher than for new items in the US.

Houses and apartments vary considerably in amount of cupboard and other storage space but the newer homes generally have ample space. Lighting fixtures may not be sufficient in the living and dining areas. Bring them or plan on ordering. Local fixtures are expensive. Local furniture is expensive, and you may need outdoor furniture.

Colonial houses tend to be dark for coolness and the windows have wooden slats or shutters to protect furnishings from sunlight. Modern quintas are open and light so you may have to provide some heavy window coverings for strong sunlight hours. Houses are not often screened and bugs can be a nuisance.

A drapery allowance, currently up to $800, is provided for Department of State personnel. Both houses and apartments generally have many windows and sliding glass doors. Window dimensions and ceiling heights are not standard; ceilings tend to be higher than in the US.

Utilities and Equipment

All apartments and houses occupied by Embassy personnel in Caracas have hot and cold water. Bathrooms are modern and include a shower and/or bathtub.

Water cutoffs are frequent, so find housing with water storage tanks to supplement your normal supply for up to several weeks; this is a disadvantage in apartment rental as supplementary water supplies are rarely adequate.

Caracas has 110v, 60-cycle, single-phase, AC. Power blackouts are rare and brief. Voltage fluctuations are more common in some areas of the city, particularly in newer suburbs. A 220-v current is available in some houses or apartments and can be installed at a reasonable price, if necessary.

Natural gas lines have now been installed through much of the city. Although some houses and apartment buildings do not yet have the necessary connections, natural gas is efficient, and it is cheaper than electricity or bottled gas. Areas without natural gas use liquid propane or bottled gas, which is generally available and reasonably priced.

Wait to see the type of housing you find, what kind of equipment it contains, and the availability of appropriate hookups before purchasing major appliances.

Stoves are usually provided in most houses and apartments. State and USICA employees are provided with stove, refrigerator, and washer and dryer. Refrigerators with large freezing compartments are not usually provided, but if they are, a second refrigerator is useful. Parts and service are available but expensive. Freezers are useful. If you have one, bring it. With duty-free privileges, major appliances can be brought in through Miami if you wish to wait to purchase.

Washers and dryers are essential, especially for families. Single personnel might consider bringing a small washer-dryer combination because of space limitations. US models function well here. Dishwashers are often built-in in newer, larger homes. Portables are convenient but sometimes require a special heater or do not work properly because of low water pressure. If you have a trash compactor and you plan to live in a house, bring it. Large garbage bags are useful also.

Electric fans have been useful for many, and air-conditioners are generally not necessary. Space heaters are not necessary, nor is central heating.

Floor polishers are useful since most housing has wood, tile, or terrazzo floors. Polishers are sold locally but are expensive.

US-type radios and TVs need no adjustments to operate in Venezuela. Color TV is now available but still

limited. Video-tape recorders are popular and a "Betamax" Club is run by the Recreation Association at the Embassy. Some Betamaxes are cheaper in Venezuela than in the US.

FOOD

Generally, Caracas offers a complete range of quality food products, most at considerably higher prices than in the US, especially for imported foods, and you may have to search for certain items.

Shopping is done at the large, American-style supermarkets which abound, at convenient corner stores (abastos), and at the farmers markets (mercado libre).

Supermarkets are generally well stocked, but some items are unavailable for months at a time. Specialty shops carry unusual imported items (expensive), but bring your favorites or make arrangements to order and have them sent.

Many Americans find the mercado libre both fun and economical. You must go early to get the best quality fresh fruits and vegetables. The commissary is run by the Embassy Employees' Association. It is stocked with wines and liquor and some items difficult to find on the local market.

A wide variety of locally grown vegetables is quite good, though not consistently up to US standards. These are supplemented by imported vegetables which can be expensive. Some Americans take advantage of the excellent quality of fresh fruits and vegetables sold by vendors from trucks. Some vendors deliver. Bananas, papayas (locally called lechosa), coconuts, pineapples, mangoes, melons, and citrus fruits are abundant but expensive. Local peaches and apricots are disappointing. Apples and pears are imported and are expensive.

Bread, meat, and fish are available in supermarkets. Bakery goods are generally excellent. Many Americans prefer to buy these items at the bakeries, butcher shops, and fish shops that dot the residential areas. Some stores deliver.

Good quality beef in all popular cuts is available at prices close to or higher than those in the US. Venezuelan beef is grass-fed and not aged. It is less tasty and less fatty than the US corn-fed animal. Pork is excellent and reasonably priced. Imported New Zealand lamb is frequently available. Veal is almost never available. Local poultry is almost always plentiful. Prices are high and quality fair. Seafood is always plentiful and of excellent quality, and comparably priced. Shrimp, which is expensive, and red snapper (pargo) are especially popular. Coldcuts and sausage are varied and plentiful.

Fresh pasteurized and homogenized milk is available throughout the year at a government-controlled price slightly higher than in the US. Doctors consider the milk safe for children, but evaporated or powdered milk is recommended for infants under 6 months.

All canned foods are expensive. Most stores carry a variety of canned foods (excluding baby food meat) imported from the US or made locally under license. The variety is improving all the time, as the prices increase.

Local cheeses are acceptable but lack flavor or are salty. Imported cheeses are expensive. Good quality eggs are available.

Venezuelan ice cream is expensive but good. It is available in the usual flavors plus some tropical fruit flavors not found in the US.

Paper products are available but of inferior quality and at higher prices. Imported paper towels, toilet tissue, Kleenex, etc., are four to five times more than US prices.

Frozen vegetables, fruits, and fruit juices are widely available but are of poor quality due to thawing and refreezing.

CLOTHING

Venezuelans are well dressed, often in continental styles. Caracas' climate can be quite warm, although cooler in December and January. You will need a summer-weight wardrobe the year round, although full-weight clothes are comfortable November to March. Fall clothes can be worn in December, January, and February. Bring a good umbrella for the rainy season. Raincoats offer added protection but are seldom worn because they are too hot. Sunglasses are necessary. Sportswear and beachwear suitable for the US are fine for clubs and beaches but not for street wear.

Despite the wide selection of ready-to-wear clothing and shoes in Caracas, prices are prohibitive. Most Embassy personnel prefer to bring as much of their own wardrobes as possible. You can refill your needs through mail-order shipments, especially for children's clothes. APO privileges cut the shipping time to 3 weeks or less.

Women. Bring what you would wear in late spring or early summer in Washington, DC, or New York. Normal daytime wear is cotton, linen, and other light fabrics. Also needed are dressier cotton dresses and skirts and blouses. Women wear pants, slacks, and designer jeans, but not shorts.

Women tend to follow European and US fashions. Cocktail dresses are normally worn to cocktail parties and dinners. Evening pants and long skirts are permissible. Silk, satin, sheer knits, and jerseys are popular fabrics. At least one long evening dress is needed for the Marine Ball and other formal events. Fur stoles are seldom seen, but a light sweater, shawl, or dressy jacket is useful for cooler evenings. Hats are not currently being worn.

Fabrics and patterns are available. However, patterns are not always fashionable and can cost two to three times what they cost in the US. If you sew, bring a good selection of fabrics, especially cottons and cotton-blends; notions; and patterns. Women's shoes are stylish, and good quality ones are quite expensive. Large (over size 9) or wide women's shoes are next to impossible to find in Caracas.

Men. Men tend to dress slightly more conservatively than in the warmer areas of the US and show a preference for dark colors. Summer-weight suits are generally worn in dark colors but light colors are also seen. Several lightweight wash-and-wear suits and a blazer are useful but not essential. The quality of drycleaning is good.

Sports shirts, guayaberas, and slacks are worn for informal occasions everywhere in Venezuela. However, if purchased locally, they will cost two to three times that of a better US shop. Shorts are worn only at beaches and on the tennis court.

Dark suits will suffice for almost all evening occasions. If you own a black dinner jacket, bring it. White dinner jackets are never worn in Caracas. Dress suits, tuxedos, and morning clothes can be rented. Business and professional men rarely wear hats in Caracas.

Children. Durable summer wear is the best clothing for children in Caracas. For outdoor activities, children often wear blue jeans. Bring light sweaters for cool evenings and mornings. Heavy pajamas or sleepers with feet are needed for infants in winter (December-February).

School clothes worn in the US are suitable here. Levis or jeans are popular with boys and girls. While the American schools have a standard dress code, the British school requires short pants and shirts for the boys and dresses or skirts for the girls; no jeans or slacks are permitted. Some private Venezuelan schools require a school uniform. Bring scout uniforms.

Some American-style shoes are made and sold in Caracas. They are somewhat wider than standard American shoes. The quality of children's shoes varies. They are higher in price than US-made shoes.

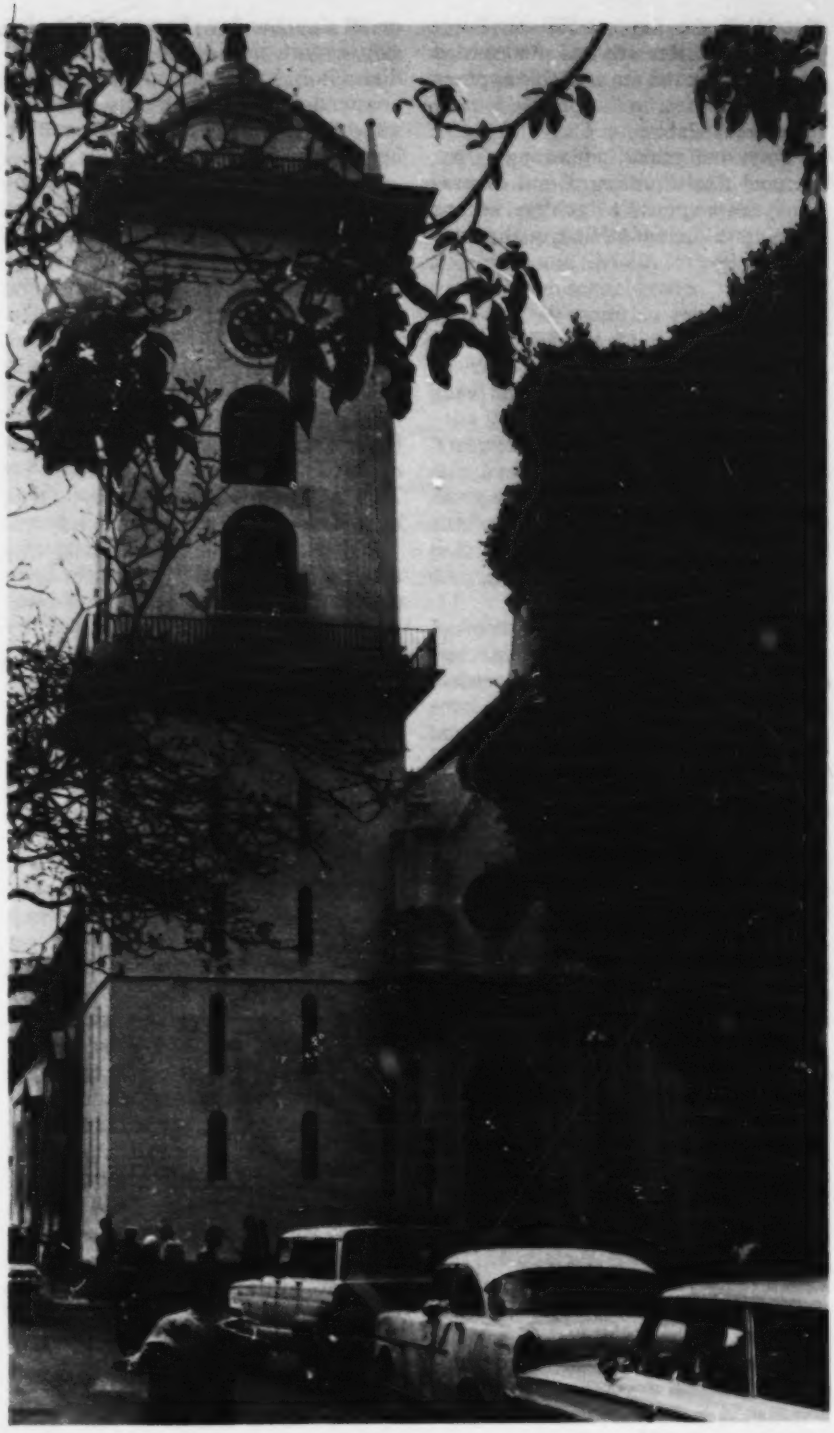
Teenagers. One dressy outfit for occasional parties or school functions may be required. Jeans are universal wear for daily activities. T-shirts are popular. Bring extra tennis shoes.

SUPPLIES AND SERVICES

Supplies

Popular American brand-name toiletries, cosmetics, and household supplies can be found in Caracas. These items, whether locally made or imported, cost substantially more than in the US, with a few exceptions such as soap and toothpaste. Many people bring an initial supply of personal items such as contact lense solutions, razor blades and shaving cream, hypoallergenic cosmetics, favorite hairspray, and suntan preparations, and then order additional quantities sent from the US via the APO.

In contrast to cosmetics, drugs and medicines are price controlled and can usually be bought at prices comparable to or under those in the US.



Caracas Cathedral in Plaza Bolivar.

Camera film of all types is expensive. Printing and developing services range from excellent to satisfactory. The APO can also be utilized for purchasing and processing of film.

Venezuela has its own record in-

dustry but also imports US and European records. Records and prerecorded tapes and cassettes are available at prices higher than those in the US. No 8-track tapes are available.

Toys and games, gift wrapping paper, and Christmas cards and decorations are expensive locally, as are books, greeting cards, and quality stationery.

Basic Services

Tailoring, drycleaning, laundry, shoe repair, radio and TV repair, electrical work, plumbing, fumigation, and auto repair are available and generally adequate. Standards of work and cost vary considerably. Therefore, imported appliances and equipment should be in good repair. Good hairdressers and barbers are available.

Domestic Help

Many families employ a general maid who cooks, cleans, and cares for children. A live-in servant is recommended for families who rent houses, as burglary of unattended houses is high. Laundresses, cleaning women, waiters, and gardeners are available at daily or hourly rates. Trained professional servants are rare. Very few American families have more than one full-time servant. Single personnel and families in apartments usually hire only a cleaning and laundry maid for 1 or 2 days a week. Venezuelan immigration laws permit diplomatic and consular officers to bring servants from their previous posts.

West Indian (primarily Trinidadian), Spanish, Colombian, and Venezuelan Andean girls are the most common domestic servants. The West Indians speak English, but it is not always easily understood by Americans.

At present, day servants earn about Bs60 to Bs70 a day (about $15). Full-time, live-in servants average $275 a month. Salary depends on skills, experience, and documentation. In addition to wages, employers provide food and uniforms. Legally required fringe benefits for full-time servants are an annual bonus paid in December, 15 days paid vacation a year, 15 days' notice or pay prior to discharge, and half a day a week off.

In practice, many Americans give their servants about 1½ days off a week, generally Thursday afternoon and part or all day Sunday. Some people also give servants time off on legal holidays. Since it is hazardous to leave homes unattended in Caracas, most families schedule their activities so they can be home when the maid is away.

In December, small tips (aguinaldos) are expected from those who have served you all year—the garbage collectors, paper carrier, bus driver, mail carrier, and others. In an apartment, the concierge (conserje) expects a tip too.

RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES

Several major English-speaking church communities are in Caracas. St. Thomas More, a Roman Catholic parish, is served by an American priest. The United Christian Church, an interdenominational Protestant church; the Bethel Baptist Church; and the Savior Lutheran Church all have American ministers. St. Mary's Pro-Cathedral Church (Anglican-Episcopal) has a British bishop. The First Church of Christ Scientist helds services also. All churches have services as well as religious instruction and Sunday school or Bible study.

The Mormon community has several wards throughout the city. The Jewish (orthodox and conservative) congregations have several synagogues. These services are conducted in Spanish and Hebrew. B'nai B'rith has services for the main holy days in Spanish, Hebrew, and English.

All these congregations have a full range of social activities, providing an excellent way to meet others from the international community. Church announcements are printed in the English-language newspaper. Also, you can obtain from FLO a printed schedule of churches, listing their locations and the times of services.

EDUCATION

Dependent Education

At Post. Excellent schools are available in Venezuela. Most Embassy children attend one of Caracas' two fully US-accredited schools: Campo Alegre (Campo), pre-kindergarten through grade 9, and Colegio Internacional de Caracas (CIC), kindergarten through grade 12. These schools limit their enrollment. Write to the Embassy Personnel Office requesting reservations for your children as soon as possible.

Both schools are private. They require a registration fee, tuition payments, and transportation fees. Allowances are reported annually to cover such costs. Uniforms are not required. Documentation required for enrollment is a school transcript, transfers, and grade cards or school records. Entrance placement examinations can be taken if such documentation is not available. A certificate of medical examination is also required. It may be obtained before or after arrival in Venezuela.

The school year normally runs from the first of September until the middle of June. The program of instruction closely parallels the US system. Both schools use a contained classroom system at the elementary level, and departmentalized classes in junior and senior high school. Students or graduates from these schools are qualified to enroll in public or private schools, colleges, and universities in the US since they both are fully accredited by the US Southern Association of Schools and Colleges. Instruction is primarily in English. Most teachers are recruited from the US and are US certified. The Venezuelan Ministry of Education requires that all students receive some instruction in Spanish and certain civics, language, and history courses. Library, labs, audiovisual, and computer facilities are fully adequate although not luxurious by US standards.

Both schools have a full-time administrative staff which operates under the direction of an annually elected Board of Directors on which the Embassy has representation. The schools also sponsor Parent-Teacher-Student Associations and provide ample opportunities for formal consultation and informal exchanges between parents and teachers. A full-time nurse is on duty at each school.

Facilities for children with learning disabilities are not available, although private tutoring can be used for some problems.

Both schools offer an extensive physical education program, although varsity sports are not emphasized as much as in US schools. Varsity teams have

limited schedules, but more students can participate in sports than in large US schools. The schools do not have facilities for such specialized sports as golf and swimming. CIC has one tennis court but no team.

The two schools offer a variety of extracurricular activities and periodic evening social activities for older children. Bus transportation is available from most neighborhoods.

Educational opportunities in Caracas are good, and the consensus here is that both schools offer a solid education. Most children have to work harder than in US schools. You can make your decision based on the ages of your children and the convenience of the schools to your home. Senior high students attend CIC and an advanced level 9th grade student may find wider course options at CIC.

Campo Alegre is situated in a quiet residential area of Las Mercedes and has an excellent physical plant, including a covered but open-sided gymnasium very appropriate for the Caracas climate. It is centrally located and access is easy. Enrollment is currently over 900, with 44 nationalities represented. A major building program, due to be completed in 1980, will provide the school with 14 new classrooms and a 650-seat auditorium with stage and orchestra pit. This expansion will relieve some present crowding of classrooms. The excellent facilities make Campo a center for many English-speaking community functions and it is the site of the American Little League Baseball program sponsored by various US companies and the PTA. The school is a member of the National Association of Independent Schools and has a chapter of the Junior National Honor Society. Cub and Boy Scouts, Brownies, and Girl Scouts are also active as an after-school activity.

Colegio Internacional de Caracas provides the advantage of the small town school with a full range of ages on one campus. The physical facilities are modest and there is ample space for outdoor sports and activities. The campus covers a sizeable hilltop and commands a sweeping view of the Caracas valley. Students are restricted to the campus during school hours but the greater majority find ample activity to occupy themselves in the informal school setting. Most students find CIC the center of their life and social activity in Caracas. An on-campus canteen serves a light lunch.

Present enrollment is about 700; 48% are North American, 24% are Venezuelan, and 50 other nationalities comprise the remainder. The student-teacher ratio is 17 to 1 so students usually enjoy relatively small classes. Some 25 clubs and activities are available for junior and senior high school students. CIC has a chapter of the National Honor Society and the Mu Alpha Theta Math Society, and participates in the Merit Scholar program, the "Close-Up" educational visit to Washington, DC, and the European Tour program. From 95% to 98% of the graduating class goes on to college and the school offers guidance and counseling, including a full range of achievement and advance placement tests, such as the PSAT, SAT, ACT, and AP tests. Advance placement classroom programs are offered in English, French, Spanish, history, math, and science. An exchange program with a university in the US allows faculty and other members of the community to upgrade their qualifications at the post-graduate level.

Several other good, private schools in the Caracas area have been used by some Embassy families, and are also attended by other North American children. The Washington Academy, located in Las Mercedes, offers programs for kindergarten through grade 8. The Gloria Felix School, nursery through grade 8, and Jefferson Academy, pre-kindergarten through grade 6, are both located in San Roman. The Vermont School, in Altamira, holds classes from nursery through grade 3. Instruction at these schools is in English, except where Spanish instruction is required.

Caracas has many good, private nursery schools, some English speaking, some bilingual. A list can be obtained from the FLO coordinator. Neighborhood Spanish-speaking nurseries are numerous.

Other international community schools include Escuela Britanica. It offers kindergarten through grade 6. Some Embassy families send their children there. The curriculum closely follows the British system. Girls are required to wear dresses or skirts and short pants and shirts are normal wear for the boys. Two days a week a PE uniform of navy blue shorts and white T-shirts is worn by all. The education is excellent, but application must be made early as no special places are held for the Embassy. Colegio Francia has a complete elementary school with instruction in French and Spanish. Science courses are the only high school courses given. At the Colegio Humbolt instruction is in German and Spanish for both elementary and high school grades.

Private Venezuelan elementary and secondary schools are numerous in Caracas. Many are Catholic, and some have boarding facilities.

Away From Post. Most Americans find that local private schools are entirely adequate, except at the university level, although some take advantage of the proximity of the US and send their children there to boarding schools.

Special Educational Opportunities

For Spanish-speaking students, college classes are available at several universities. Universidad Simon Bolivar is free but entrance is difficult for foreigners. Universidad Andres Bello and Universidad Metropolitana are private and charge tuition. Due to the general difficulty of transferring foreign credits to the US, many have chosen to audit classes.

The Audubon Society (La Sociedad Conservacionista Audubon de Venezuela) maintains an environment reference library, holds monthly meetings, and has varied excursions each month.

The Caracas Circulating Library maintains a large collection of current bestsellers in English, both fiction and nonfiction, as well as a children's library.

The Caracas Playhouse, an English-language theater group, produces plays and musicals with the purpose of developing amateur theater in Caracas. Previous experience is not required for participation.

The post conducts daily Spanish-language classes. Spanish and English instruction are available through the Centro Venezolano Americano (CVA). The CVA also has a lending library and sponsors a wide variety of cultural programs. Other languages may be studied through various institutions such as the Centro Venezolano Italiano and Alianza

Francesa. English- and Spanish-language lessons are also offered through Instituto Cultural Venezolano Britanico.

The Venezuelan-American Association of University Women offers a biannual Study Group Program which is open to nonmembers as well as members. Courses are offered in drawing, painting, sculpture, photography, calligraphy, interior decoration, and batik; education (including Venezuelan Field Study), bridge, minilectures on countries of the world, world religions, shorthand and typing, Indians of Venezuela, music, languages, cooking, and physical fitness.

Classes in music, dance, physical fitness, arts and crafts, languages, and many other subjects are available at commercial institutions and individuals, but are generally expensive.

Post Orientation Program

New official personnel receive an informative Welcome Kit with information needed to become established in Caracas. Periodic orientation sessions are held for newcomers and their families. The US Embassy Women's Association also has a welcoming committee to help orient incoming personnel and to provide tips on protocol, schools, shopping, etc. The local American Chamber of Commerce provides an annual orientation session, widely attended by newcomers and old hands alike.

Embassy-sponsored Spanish-language classes are available to all official personnel and on a space-available basis to their adult dependents. Daily instruction is provided on all levels of proficiency by competent instructors using FSI texts and programs. The Binational Center offers Spanish classes also at a reasonable fee.

RECREATION AND SOCIAL LIFE

Sports

Activities in the immediate Caracas area are limited, but some sports and other activities are organized through the Embassy. Embassy personnel have formed a year-round mixed bowling league. Some 12 teams participate. Anyone interested can be a regular team member or a substitute. An Embassy softball team plays against club teams.

The US Mission Recreation Association operates a Betamax club and sponsors parties, hiking and camping trips, art shows, talent nights, sports events, and trips to interesting places in Venezuela and other countries. A small membership fee is required.

Caracas has a few public swimming pools, one in Parque Miranda close to the Embassy. It has excellent swimming instruction in an olympic-size pool and offers swim team competition. A nominal one-time membership fee in the local Swimming Federation is the only cost. The pool at the Ambassador's residence is open to Embassy personnel three mornings a week and all day Saturday. Public tennis courts in El Cafetal charge by the hour for court use. Recreation for school-age children is available primarily through the schools.

At present the Cota Mil Autopista is closed off on Sunday mornings and people can bicycle, skateboard, or walk freely; otherwise, bicycling is impossible in some parts of Caracas.

Gardening year round is possible, and house plants, native orchids, and other flowers are offered in Caracas' numerous nurseries. Caracas is a great place for people interested in gardening or with a green thumb.

Clubs in Caracas are excellent, fully equipped, and provide all possible facilities. They are also difficult to get into without buying or renting an expensive share. A few clubs offer limited diplomatic or "transeunte" shares, and even then dues range from $150 to $400 a month. A list of the clubs is available upon request and is included in the Welcome Kit.

Anyone interested in exploring the country will find a four-wheel-drive vehicle useful. Bring sports equipment to post when possible, as local equipment and supplies are expensive.

Good to excellent fishing can be found 3 to 6 hours from the city at several large, man-made lakes. Also, a trip to the llanos (the plains in the interior) offers the catch of a lifetime. A fishing license is required, but can be obtained with minimum effort. Spearfishing, scuba diving, and snorkeling are popular along the coast. Boats can be rented for deep-sea fishing at the Macuto Sheraton marina.

Hunting is against the law. However, in 1979, for the first time in 5 years, the government proclaimed a duck season. This also requires a license. The importation of guns is illegal, but personnel on the diplomatic list may import them with personal effects. Venezuelan laws require gun registration. For specific information on FIREARMS AND AMMUNITION see Notes For Travelers.

Excellent hiking trails lead up the sides of the Avila Mountains. The varieties of flora are unbelievable. The plateaus offer an opportunity for sports such as softball, volleyball, soccer, etc. Picnicking is a popular activity on the Avilas. No charge is made for climbing the Avilas and overnight camping is easily done. A permit is needed for all activities in National Parks.

The Andean region of Venezuela has some of the world's most spectacular and beautiful scenery. Popular activities are mountain climbing and trout fishing.

For birdwatchers and anyone interested in exploring the countryside, the local Audubon Society organizes outings regularly. The most interesting require a four-wheel-drive vehicle and overnight camping.

Spectator sports are as popular among Caraquenos of all ages as they are among Americans. Professional baseball leagues, often featuring American players, have a full schedule of games after the US season closes. The general level is that of a good minor league in the US. Soccer is followed by many Venezuelans. Some of the finest teams in the world tour here occasionally and are worth seeing. A major bullfight season is held annually in Caracas' Nuevo Circo with well-known bullfighters. Tickets are quite expensive. Horseraces are held every Saturday and Sunday year round. The spacious stands are nearly always filled. A large percentage of the city's residents bet the weekly "cinco y seis" ticket (picking five or six winners out of the last six races). Occasional night races are held.

Touring and Outdoor Activities

Caracas has several historical churches and museums, including the birthplace of Simon Bolivar, a museum of fine arts, a museum of natural history, and a museum of contemporary art with

several branches. There are also some fine parks. Strollers may enjoy Parque Los Caobos, Los Chorros, or the Parque del Este with its attractively laid out zoo and planetarium. The latter, just 3 blocks from the Embassy, is also a good park for joggers.

Beaches within a short drive from Caracas are crowded on weekends, particularly on Sunday. For longer trips, the lovely beach at Cata to the west of Caracas or Rio Chico and Playa Colorada to the east are popular for weekends. Boating and water skiing are popular along the coast and tent camping is possible on most beaches. Again, a four-wheel-drive vehicle provides access to less crowded beaches.

An interesting 1-day excursion from Caracas over excellent roads is to Colonia Tovar, a settlement of German immigrants about 40 miles from Caracas. The picturesque houses and excellent cuisine are reminiscent of the Bavarian Alps. Another pleasant day trip out of Caracas is to Los Teques where one can ride a narrow-gage train to El Encanto Park. The trip affords lovely scenery and a picnic lunch at the end of the line.

Other excursions offer vistas of natural beauty. Canaima, for example, is a small settlement in the jungle at the base of the spectacular falls of the Carrao River. It is accessible only by air. An added attraction is an aerial view of Angel Falls, highest in the world (3,312 feet). They were named for an American aviator, Jimmy Angel, who landed above them in 1937.

Another interesting trip is the sometimes tricky drive through the western Andean states of Venezuela. The quaint university town of Merida has the longest and highest cable car ride in the world. The ride is over 7 miles long and rises over 11,000 feet to link Merida with snow-capped Bolivar Peak, which is over 16,000 feet high.

Trips to nearby Caribbean islands are also popular. The Venezuelan island of Margarita combines the charm of old Spanish colonial forts and churches with some of the most beautiful beaches in Venezuela. Curacao, Aruba, Bonaire, Barbados, and Trinidad and Tobago are other interesting islands to visit. Trinidad is especially exciting during Carnival when the entire island closes down and "jumps up" for 4 days to the music of hundreds of steel bands. Remember that air travel in Venezuela is not cheap and hotel accommodations must be arranged far in advance.

For the more adventurous there are canoe trips to Angel Falls, trips into the interior to visit missionaries working among primitive Indians, flights over the Grand Sabana area near the Brazilian frontier, boat trips down the Orinoco from Puerto Ayacucho to Ciudad Bolivar, and camping on the llanos (plains).

The famous War of Independence battlefield at Carabobo, about 80 miles from Caracas, and a few remains of old Spanish forts along the coast offer opportunities for the amateur historian.

The Caracas skyline.

Entertainment

Caracas enjoys a diversity of international cuisine; Argentine-style steak houses and Italian and French restaurants are the most popular. Some restaurants provide music and dinner dancing. The city has many nightclubs. Private discotheques and jazz clubs are becoming increasingly common. Membership fees range from $300 to $400 a year. A woman usually needs a male escort to enter clubs in Caracas at night.

Modern movie theaters, including several drive-ins, are located throughout the city. The majority of films shown are American and British with Spanish subtitles, but French, Italian, and Mexican movies are also presented. First-run movies from the US are rare. Venezuela does not yet have its own highly developed feature-length film industry, but sophisticated "soap operas," aired during prime-time by local TV stations, are avidly followed by many.

Sports fans can expect to see the World Series, Super Bowl, and championship boxing matches on TV. Videotape viewing, using the "Betamax" system, is a popular form of entertainment. Caracas has several videotape clubs, including one sponsored by the US Mission Recreation Association.

Social Activities

Caracas is an ethnically varied and cosmopolitan city, offering many opportunities to get involved. The extent and direction of social activities depends largely on your initiative. Several outstanding organizations help newcomers get introduced.

Groups and activities within the American community include Venezuelan-American Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club International, Lions Club International, the Audubon Society, a hiking club (Circulo Excursionistas), and scouting. American citizens automatically become non-dues-paying members of the North American Association, a charitable organization dedicated to improved US-Venezuela relations. The Association sponsors an annual picnic, ball, marathon run, and a charity raffle each year. The Centro Venezolano-Americano sponsors social and cultural events. The Circulo de Funcionarios Diplomaticos (Consular Corps), an association of consular officers from all countries represented in Venezuela, has regular meetings and an annual banquet.

Many activities and organizations are aimed at women in the American community. The US Embassy Women's Association meets once a month at the Ambassador's residence. Membership is open to all women with US citizenship. The Association offers a varied program with emphasis on Venezuela.

The Children's Service League (CSL) is a volunteer organization which works with children and young adults, raises money for hospitalized and handicapped children, and annually helps 20 institutions and hospitals. CSL activities include sewing workshops, a mini-bookstore, a bridge club, and a bowling league, as well as the design, preparation, and sale of its annual collection of Christmas and note cards. The CSL holds a Christmas bazaar at which these cards and handicrafts are sold.

The Newcomer's Club welcomes newcomers to Caracas with tips on how to adapt to its culture and social life. It is a great place to meet other newcomers who live in your own area.

Damas Diplomaticas for women is an association of all diplomatic officers and wives in Venezuela. This association holds a yearly Christmas bazaar also.

The Venezuelan-American Association of University Women (VAAUW), offers membership only to university graduates. Those who attended college for 2 years may join as associate members. However, their excellent and varied courses and many of their programs and activities are open to nonmembers. The annual VAAUW flea market is fun and helps many charities.

Marine House social affairs and US Mission Recreation Association parties are good get-acquainted opportunities.

OFFICIAL FUNCTIONS

Senior officers are involved in the usual number of national day receptions and other representational functions. Although junior officers and staff are not as involved in official functions as senior officers, many welcome the opportunity to entertain Venezuelans and members of the foreign community in their homes.

All new personnel are introduced to the Ambassador and Deputy Chief of Mission shortly after arrival. Other members of the US Mission are met at the weekly general staff meeting.

Courtesy calls on the spouse of the Ambassador, the Minister Counselor, and other senior officers, while not required, are welcomed and are often useful to new arrivals for establishing early personal contact. If interested, please check with the personnel officer or FLO coordinator upon arrival.

Diplomatic and consular officers are announced to the Foreign Office and other diplomatic missions by note. The practice of leaving cards with host officials and officials of other missions is up to the individual but can be useful.

Calling cards, while more expensive than in the US, are available locally and local firms are often used to print invitations and business-type cards. Those with representational responsibilities can use 100 to 200 calling business cards a year. "Mr. and Mrs." cards normally are not required. Informal cards with envelopes for invitations, acknowledgements, and other notes are not necessary but are useful. A widespread practice here is the use of Mr. and Mrs. invitation cards, printed locally, giving the address and telephone number.

A *Gaceta Official* is published twice a year, usually in January and July, listing all diplomatic posts. The Department booklet *Diplomatic Social Usage* gives valuable hints for all incoming personnel and is available at the Department in Washington, DC.

Consulate

MARACAIBO

The Consulate and Binational Center at Maracaibo, in the State of Zulia, serve the area that produces the largest share of Venezuela's wealth. With a rapidly growing population of over 1 million, Maracaibo is Venezuela's second largest city. The downtown area, which includes a small, fairly modern port, has a mixture of older buildings in the Spanish colonial tradition with newer structures, such as the Concejo Municipal, or city hall.

The consular district served by Maracaibo includes the five Venezuelan States of Zulia, Trujillo, Tachira, Falcon, and Merida. About 4,500 Americans live in the district. One-third live in Maracaibo: The rest live mainly in the oil towns of Cabimas, La Salina, Tia Juana, and Lagunillas on the eastern shore of Lake Maracaibo; in Judibana; and at the Amuay refinery on the Paraguana Peninsula in Falcon State.

The principal industry is oil production. Over 80% of Venezuela's oil comes from the Lake Maracaibo Basin. El Tablazo, a large petrochemical complex, is located across the lake from the city of Maracaibo. The world's largest oil refinery is at Amuay. An open-pit coal mine in Guasare will begin production in 1982. A large steel mill complex is planned for the city.

Another important product of the district on a much smaller scale is shrimp and crab which are exported to the US. Cattle raising is also extensive. Most of Venezuela's milk and grapes come from Zulia State.

Maracaibo is hot and humid most of the year. Temperatures vary only about 4° per year round. Daytime temperatures in the 90s are normal.

Annual rainfall is slightly over 20 inches. Light rains begin in May and become more frequent and heavier by November.

THE POST AND ITS ADMINISTRATION

The Consulate occupies offices on the second floor of Edificio Matema on Avenida 15 between Calle 78 and 79. Telephone numbers are 51-6506 and 51-6507. The post office box is apartado number 426, and the telex number is USCON 62213 VE. The Consulate is linked to the Automated Visa Lookout System and is linked by telex with Caracas. The Consulate is staffed with three officers and four national employees. The post has a 1978 station wagon for the principal officer's use.

The Binational Center (Centro Venezolano-Americano del Zulia) was inaugurated by the Ambassador and prominent citizens of Maracaibo in 1973. The Centro, in cooperation with USICA, conducts English and Spanish courses and presents cultural programs of Venezuelan and American art, exhibits, lectures, and music. It has a library of about 6,000 volumes (in English and Spanish).

The Centro Venezolano-Americano del Zulia is located near the Hotel del Lago at Calle 63, No. 3E-60. Telephone is 91-14-36, 91-18-80.

If you are not met, cab fare from the airport should not exceed Bs50 (US $12).

Guide To Living in Maracaibo is on sale at the Consulate for Bs50.

HOUSING

Temporary Quarters

No temporary government quarters are used in Maracaibo. Hotel rooms are in short supply and service may vary from good to minimal. Four hotels provide adequate accommodations for American staff members. The Aparthotel Presidente offers efficiency suites with refrigerators and stoves. The Hotel Kristoff offers cabanas, and reservations must be made well in advance. The Grand Hotel Delicias is one of the newest hotels, and it is in relatively easy walking distance. However, the rooms are small and not suitable for families. The most expensive of the four hotels is the Intercontinental Hotel del Lago. It occupies a pleasant location on the lakeshore but it is not convenient to either the Consulate or shopping. All four hotels have swimming pools, restaurants, and bars.

New arrivals should plan to spend at least a month in temporary quarters while searching for permanent quarters and awaiting the arrival of household effects. It generally takes 2-4 months for household effects to arrive at Maracaibo.

Permanent Housing

Maracaibo has only one government-leased official residence, that of the principal officer. Suitable housing can be difficult to find, but several real estate agencies employ English-speaking agents to make the task easier. Some agents require a half month's rent for this service. Sometimes, word of mouth is the best means of finding quarters.

Rents are rapidly rising in Maracaibo. Suitable apartments rent for upwards of Bs3,000 ($700) per month, without appliances or air-conditioners. Houses usually are more expensive, with price levels beginning in the Bs5,000 ($1,200) range.

Furnishings

Most furniture used in the US may be brought to Maracaibo, keeping in mind the hot, humid climate. If you do not own furniture, buy before coming to post. Used furniture is sometimes available from families leaving Maracaibo. However, prices are usually the same as for new furniture purchased in the US. Appliances and furniture are available locally at prices double those in the US. Good quality bamboo and rattan furni-

ture is available at prices similar to or higher than in the US.

Curtains and drapery material should be purchased after moving into permanent quarters. It is available locally at high prices, or may be ordered from the US for delivery through APO. State Department officers are authorized an $800 drapery allowance.

Utilities and Equipment

Houses and apartments have running water. Hot water heaters are not always installed. Few houses are double-piped, so a heater, if installed, will probably furnish hot water only to the kitchen and for the washer. Tapwater is usually warm anyway. In certain sections of the city, water pressure is low. Keep this in mind when looking for quarters. Plumbing is adequate.

Both State Department and USICA employees are provided with a stove, refrigerator, and washer and dryer. Screens are not generally used, so air-conditioning in the bedroom is necessary as a protection against mosquitoes. An air-conditioner in every room is an **absolute necessity.** The Consulate can usually provide a sufficient number of air-conditioners for the two junior officers. It is uncommon to find air-conditioners already installed in houses or apartments. An air-conditioner for the bedroom should have a capacity of 12,000 BTUs. One for the living room should be at least 18,000 BTUs, preferably 205–230v, AC. This type uses less electricity and has better resale value. Secondhand air-conditioners can be obtained locally at high prices.

If possible, bring a gas hot water heater and a freezer. A dishwasher is a good investment in Maracaibo, especially if it has its own hot water system. Already-installed dishwashers are rare.

Maracaibo's electric current is 115v, 60-cycle, single-phase, AC. Current of 230v, 60-cycle, single- and triple-phase is also available for air-conditioners. Voltage fluctuations often cause damage to appliance motors. No transformers are needed for standard American household appliances. Electricity is expensive.

FOOD

Maracaibo has several well-stocked supermarkets, all conveniently located in residential neighborhoods. Local fruits and vegetables are plentiful but generally expensive. Specialty shops and delicatessens around town round out regular shopping with special foods if you are willing to spend extra money. Milk deliveries are available but erratic. It is easier to buy milk at the market.

Maracaibo has some small fish markets; some of them deliver. Sometimes the lack of variety of fish and seafood will disappoint you. Prices are exceedingly high in comparison with US prices.

Meat markets are plentiful and have good cuts or will cut what you want. Ask around for a good butcher.

New personnel cannot include food, liquor, or tobacco in shipments of household effects. These items may be obtained from the Commissary Association at the Embassy in Caracas.

CLOTHING

Because of Maracaibo's year-round hot climate, clothing suitable for summer wear in the US is appropriate. Cotton dresses and suits are always the most comfortable.

The only appreciable seasonal variation in clothing is for evenings during December, January, and February when strong breezes make a light wrap for women or a jacket for men useful.

Local clothing is much too expensive to purchase in quantity, and the quality is poor. Purchase a wardrobe before arriving at post. Venezuelans dress well and in accordance with the latest European fashions.

Everyday clothes should be wash and wear. Cotton is most appropriate. Drycleaning is expensive and quality is poor.

You may need a small supply of warmer clothing for occasional vacation trips to the Andes where daytime temperatures range from 60° F to 70° F, with evening temperatures below 50° F.

Light-weight, well-ventilated shoes are most comfortable. Because of heat and humidity, shoes deteriorate rapidly.

Men. Men need a dark suit. A tuxedo is not necessary, but if you already have one, bring it. Short-sleeved shirts are a necessity for everyday and evening use. Guayaberas are common and practical. Formal attire cannot be rented here.

Men and boys wear shorts in public only when participating in sports. It is against the law to appear shirtless on the street or in a car.

Women. Bring a good supply of shoes and bags. Large and narrow-sized shoes are difficult to find in Maracaibo. Some people order through US mail-order houses. Women wear dressy shoes for social functions (usually dark at formal affairs).

Most social functions are held in air-conditioned homes and public buildings. Fabrics other than cotton are appropriate and comfortable to wear at these occasions. Nylon hose are worn on formal occasions. Formal dances are rare.

Although shorts are taboo on the streets, many women wear them around the house. Slacks are acceptable for informal gatherings in the Venezuelan and other foreign communities.

Children. Children wear light cotton clothes. Shorts are permitted in school only up to grade 3. Each child should have at least two or three bathing suits because year-round swimming in heavily chlorinated pools is hard on suits.

SUPPLIES AND SERVICES

Supplies

US-quality toilet articles and cosmetics are widely available, but at higher prices. Post personnel generally buy sundries from US mail-order outlets.

Drug and medicine supplies pose no problem, and many well-stocked pharmacies have government-controlled prices. Pharmacies deliver to your house if requested.

Basic Services

Maracaibo has fairly competent tailors and dressmakers. Seamstresses are commonly employed, though most good dressmakers are busy with local regular customers. A sewing woman for simple dressmaking, repairs, and alterations can be hired by the day for Bs50, plus breakfast and lunch. Fabric is expensive. Local patterns are available on a limited basis, but most people with access to a US mail-order house buy their clothing and patterns that way.

Drycleaning is expensive, and few

shops do good work. Ask long-term residents for a recommendation. Shoe repair is generally good.

Several good beauty shops can be found in Maracaibo.

Approach appliance repair shops with caution. Good services are available but not easy to find. Again, check with long-term residents before you take anything to be repaired, and give your business to people who guarantee their work.

Domestic Help

Maids are necessary in Maracaibo. For most people, obtaining and keeping a good one can be a problem. Most domestics now in Maracaibo are illegal Colombians and have no long-term stake in continued employment. Wages have been going up along with everything else, and an employer should expect to start a maid at a minimum of Bs700 a month.

At least one servant is usually desirable. Singles often hire a maid to work 3 to 6 times a week. Robbery of unattended houses is common, so families prefer to have a live-in maid. Babysitters are not available.

Live-in servants expect Sunday off, as well as additional holidays at Christmas. A Christmas bonus and a week's paid vacation is given each year. When a servant is discharged, 15 days' pay or notice is expected. Some servants quit if scolded, however mildly, and some quit at Christmas to visit their families. As a result, an abundance of servants are seeking work in January and February.

RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES

Maracaibo has many Roman Catholic churches. Nuestra Senora de Coromoto, Los Olivos, has English Mass on Sunday at 9:30 am. Three Protestant churches have English services—the nondenominational Christ Church, Faith Baptist Church, and First Christian Church. A Lutheran church holds services in German and in Dutch. One synagogue holds services.

EDUCATION

Dependent Education

Satisfactory schooling in English and Spanish is available through grade 9. Children are customarily sent to US secondary schools.

For English-speaking students, the American school, Escuela Bella Vista, is the only accredited high school. It has an enrollment of 500 from prekindergarten through grade 12. The teaching is excellent, and students have a variety of electives from which to choose and a good library and gym. Extracurricular activities are limited. State Department allowances cover fully the cost of attendance at this school.

Several nursery schools, called "kinder," are available for the Spanish-speaking child. The Montessori School is bilingual and the teachers are trained, but there is a long waiting list.

Special Educational Opportunities

The University of Zulia offers professional courses in medicine, dentistry, law, engineering, and humanities. Interested persons, competent in Spanish, can audit courses.

The Centro de Bellas Artes, sponsored by Venezuelans and foreigners interested in fine arts, offers class and individual instruction in painting, sculpture, ceramics, leather work, and metalwork. The Spanish-speaking instructors are competent. Fees are moderate.

The Academia de Musica, run by the State of Zulia, offers instruction in various musical instruments and voice. Private instruction in piano is available. The two ballet schools have good reputations.

RECREATION AND SOCIAL LIFE

Sports

Maracaibo has several private clubs. None extends diplomatic privileges. You must buy a share to join, and shares are expensive. In addition, a monthly quota and, in some cases, a cover charge are levied. Most clubs have restrictive membership policies. They usually have long waiting lists and poor facilities.

Some Americans belong to the Club Nautico, attractively situated on the lake and offering boat docking, fine dining, swimming, and tennis facilities. It is the most exclusive club in Maracaibo. Arrangements can be made for representation or private entertaining there. Shares cost about Bs60,000, plus monthly dues.

The Los Andes Yacht Club, whose clubhouse is an old ferry boat, offers inexpensive sailing. Members, after they have passed the club's sailing test, may use the club's two small sailboats. Membership costs $22 monthly, plus a refundable entrance fee of about $125.

The Maracaibo Country Club has a well-maintained 18-hole golf course, tennis courts, swimming pool, bar-restaurant area, and a clubhouse. Membership is Bs125 a month, plus the cost of the share, about Bs15,000.

Recreational facilities for children and teenagers are nonexistent outside of private clubs, creating a problem for family life in Maracaibo. Most sports activities take place during the evenings due to the hot climate. A public park has been constructed on the Lake (the Paseo del Lago) with a jogging course, baseball diamonds, soccer fields, and children's play equipment. The Paseo is quite popular and usually draws many people for evening recreation.

Boating and other water sports are available and popular, but the lake is polluted and the beaches are dirty. Good beaches are several hours away. Several professional sports stadiums have soccer and baseball.

Touring and Outdoor Activities

The nearest place of interest is the Rio Limon area, about 30 miles north of the city. From there you may take a boat trip upriver to see the Paraujana Indian villages built on stilts over the water. A new bridge crosses the river fo. car trips to the Indian villages of Sinamaica and Paraguaipoa, 6 and 20 miles, respectively, up the coast from the Rio Limon. The state government has built a modest beach resort, Coimare Chico (Balneario), on the Gulf of Venezuela near Sinamaica.

A pleasant change to mountains and fresh air is possible in the Andean villages of La Puerta and Timotes, about 160 miles (3–4 hours) by car from Maracaibo. Valera and Merida, farther down the Andean chain, are the nearest Andean cities accessible by air (45 minutes). Merida can be reached by car in about 9 hours. San Cristobal, near the Colombian border, and Cucuta, Colombia are also popular—though distant—mountain cities.

Caracas is about 1 hour by air or 9 hours by car. From there, you can visit other Venezuelan attractions such as

Angel Falls, Margarita Island, and the national parks. The Netherlands Antilles islands of Aruba, Curacao, and Bonaire are a short distance from Maracaibo.

Entertainment

Maracaibo has many movie houses, but few show first-run films. At least one family-type movie is usually playing somewhere, often a Walt Disney rerun. American films are shown with Spanish subtitles. Films arrive here 1-2 years after they open in the US. In addition to American pictures, British, Italian, French, and Latin American films are shown. Prices are lower than in the US.

On rare occasions, live performances, mainly by touring companies of Venezuelan folk singers and dancers, can be seen. The Maracaibo Players, an amateur English-speaking dramatic group, stages two plays during the year.

Dining out in Maracaibo can be pleasant. Prices are slightly higher than in the US and the selection is limited. The city does have very good steak houses and a number of fairly good Chinese, Italian, Spanish, and Venezuelan-style restaurants.

Numerous soda fountains and tea shops serve American-style sandwiches and ice cream.

Shortwave radio reception is generally good. A good radio can make a tour in Maracaibo more enjoyable.

Photographic supplies, equipment, and services are available in Maracaibo, but they are expensive. Processing quality is poor, so bring a supply of film mailers for a US-based lab. Kodacolor, Ektachrome, Agfacolor, Kodak black-and-white films, and a variety of European and Japanese films are available. Kodachrome is sometimes scarce. The size of Venezuelan apartments makes them ideal for the amateur photographer who would like to set up a home darkroom. Kodak processing chemicals are available. Because of the heat and high humidity, plan to store your film with silicon gel or in a refrigerator.

Social Activities

Maracaibo is a friendly city, but in order to fully participate in the community you must be able to speak Spanish. Although many people can speak English, there is no organized community of Americans or other exclusively English-speaking groups. The lingua franca for residents of all nationalities in Maracaibo is Spanish. Virtually all entertainment (with the exception of movies) and shopping require an understanding of the language. A tour in Maracaibo will be much more enjoyable for spouses and children if they are able to speak Spanish. If you do not have the equivalent of an FSI 3/3 rating when you arrive, you should plan to take courses through CEVAZ or other sources. The post has no language program at present.

Most clubs offer movies twice a week and have occasional dances and other social gatherings. Women's groups include the Maracaibo Ladies' Club, Intercambio, and the Toastmistress Club. Men join the local Jaycees, Rotary, Lions, Toastmasters, or Masons organizations.

Official and large receptions are usually cocktail parties or buffets held at home, the Hotel del Lago, or one of the clubs. An informal dinner party is a customary means of private entertaining.

Not much formal calling is done in Maracaibo. An initial stock of 300 or 350 official cards for the officer and about 100 "Mr. and Mrs." cards are sufficient. About 100 "Mr. and Mrs." informals come in handy for invitations or thank-you notes.

OFFICIAL FUNCTIONS

Official social functions are increasing, since Maracaibo is growing rapidly. The principal officer is expected to attend receptions at least twice weekly.

Notes For Travelers

GETTING TO THE POST

Family requirements determine items to send by airfreight. (See Temporary Quarters.) Bring an alarm clock; portable radio; electrical appliances such as coffee pot, fry pan or grill, and toaster; and other items that will contribute to your comfort while in temporary quarters.

Address all shipments as follows:

American Ambassador (your initials)
American Embassy
Caracas, Venezuela

All shipments to Venezuela, whether by air or surface, must have an original and one copy of a bill of lading. Shipment of household effects must also have a complete packing list of the items in the shipment. These documents should be forwarded via airmail (to the APO address or through the Department) to the GSO as soon as possible. Shipments via surface should avoid transshipment points as much as possible. Experience has shown that if a transshipment is necessary, ship to a point in the US where the Despatch Agent can make arrangements for onward shipment to Venezuela.

Normally, information on an ocean bill of lading is insufficient for the Embassy to arrange customs clearance of automobiles. You must give the GSO the following information on arrival or mail the information as soon as practicable after shipment of a vehicle:

- make, type, year, model, and color;
- body serial number and motor serial number;
- gross weight;
- shipper (usually the US Despatch Agent); and
- port of embarkation.

The Embassy also needs the original commercial invoice (bill of sale) for clearing any vehicle. A US title is not sufficient.

Make sure that all serial numbers agree on all documents (ocean bill of lading and commercial invoices). If the slightest discrepancy is found at the Venezuelan port of entry, clearance may be delayed as much as 8 weeks.

Air shipments should be addressed in the same manner as surface shipments. Air shipments of unaccompanied baggage and household effects require an airway bill of lading and packing list. This applies also to shipments by military aircraft.

Effects should be crated to withstand not only the normal hazards of shipment, but also pilferage. Liftvans are preferable. Cars need not be boxed for shipment. Ship easily removable items such as hubcaps, radio aerials, windshield wipers, radios, dashboard knobs, lighter, mirrors, etc., separately. Do not leave personal papers or belongings in the glove compartment. Because of increased damage and pilferage, marine or effects insurance is recommended.

The Venezuelan Government will not clear household effects and automobiles through customs prior to your arrival; do not send these items too far in advance. When possible, provide the Embassy with the name of the airline and the airway bill number.

Air and surface shipments may be delayed up to 30 days before release by customs. Obtaining a car license plate may take another 2 to 3 months.

Bring at least 12 1½" x 1½" photographs of yourself and 11 of each member of your family 18 years of age or older. Also required are 9 photographs of each dependent aged 12–18, and 6 of each dependent under 12 years of age. These pictures are necessary for Venezuelan drivers licenses, Embassy ID cards, and the Venezuelan carnet or cedula. It is extremely important that you have these photographs with you when you arrive. The photographs must accompany and be attached to the diplomatic note announcing your arrival. Household effects and automobiles cannot be released from customs until the note announcing your arrival has been forwarded to the ministry. Additional photographs may be obtained locally when necessary at a reasonable price.

Venezuelan rodeo.

CUSTOMS, DUTIES, AND PASSAGE

Customs and Duties

Nondiplomatic personnel may import and sell one vehicle of an exact type and model made in Venezuela during their tour, provided the vehicle is imported into Venezuela within 6 months of the owner's arrival. Cars must have the same engine size, same number of doors, etc., as the locally made car. Accredited diplomatic and consular personnel may import and sell one vehicle of any type and model every 3 years. Embassy policy is that cars must not cost more than $9,000 for passenger vehicles and $12,000 for four-wheel-drive vehicles (base sticker price) and should not be ostentatious. Cadillacs and similar cars may not be imported. If in doubt, communicate with the administrative counselor.

Personal vehicles may be sold, subject to Embassy and Venezuelan Government approval and payment of customs duty, either on transfer or, for diplomatic and consular personnel, after 3 years. No provisions are made for duty-free transfer to other diplomatic, consular, or official personnel, although such transactions are sometimes approved by the foreign office.

By bilateral agreement, all USICA personnel and Army, Navy, and Air Force attaches in general have the same privileges and are subject to the same restrictions as Department of State personnel of corresponding status and rank. Members of the Inter-American Geodetic Survey have free-entry privileges by direct bilateral agreements with the Venezuelan Government, but they are subject to the same regulations on the sale of cars and other personal property as Embassy and US Mission nondiplomatic personnel.

Nondiplomatic personnel are allowed duty-free entry of household and personal effects on initial arrival in Venezuela. These effects must arrive within 6 months of the employee's actual arrival and are limited to four shipments of any kind plus a car. Nondiplomtic personnel assigned to Caracas are advised to combine shipments as much as possible to reduce the number of free-entry requests.

Members of the Marine Guard are subject to the same duty-free entry regulations as nondiplomatic personnel.

No currency restrictions are imposed on the import of dollars by US Government personnel or on the amount of currency that can be taken out of the country.

Passage

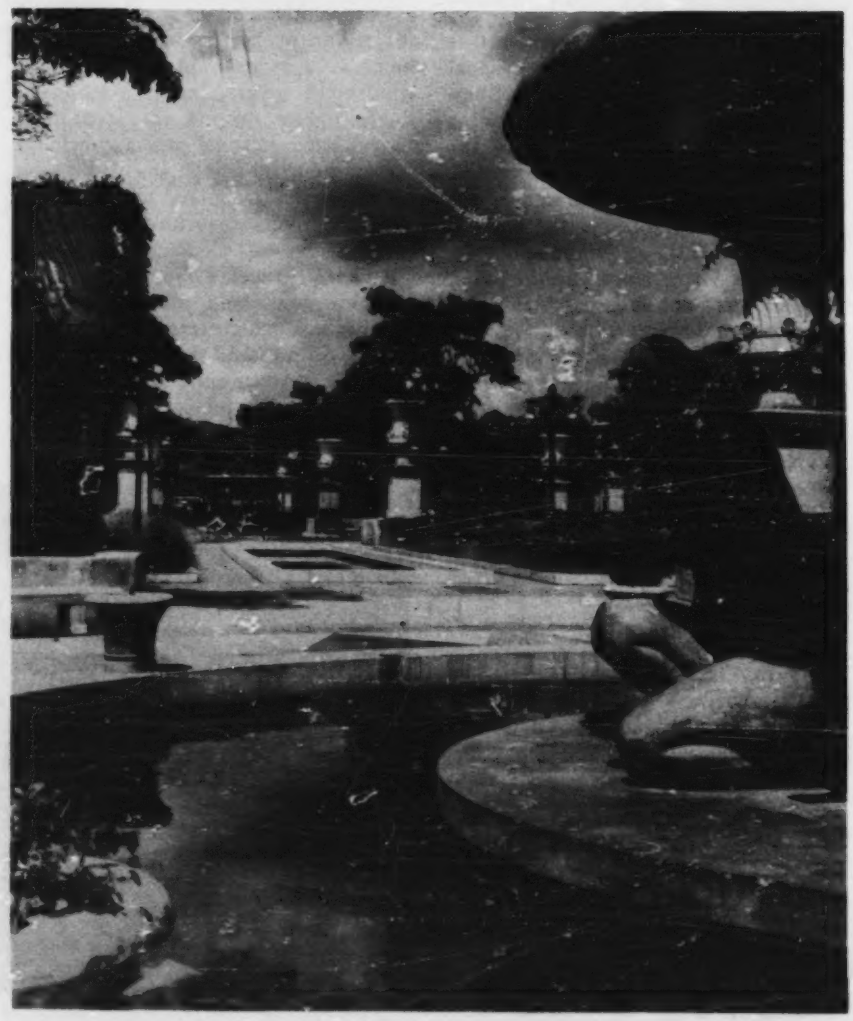
New personnel must have a valid Venezuelan visa stamped in their passports. Holders of diplomatic and official passports receive either diplomatic or courtesy visas. Both are valid for 1 year and for multiple entries. Holders of regular passports who are officially assigned to Venezuela generally receive courtesy visas also.

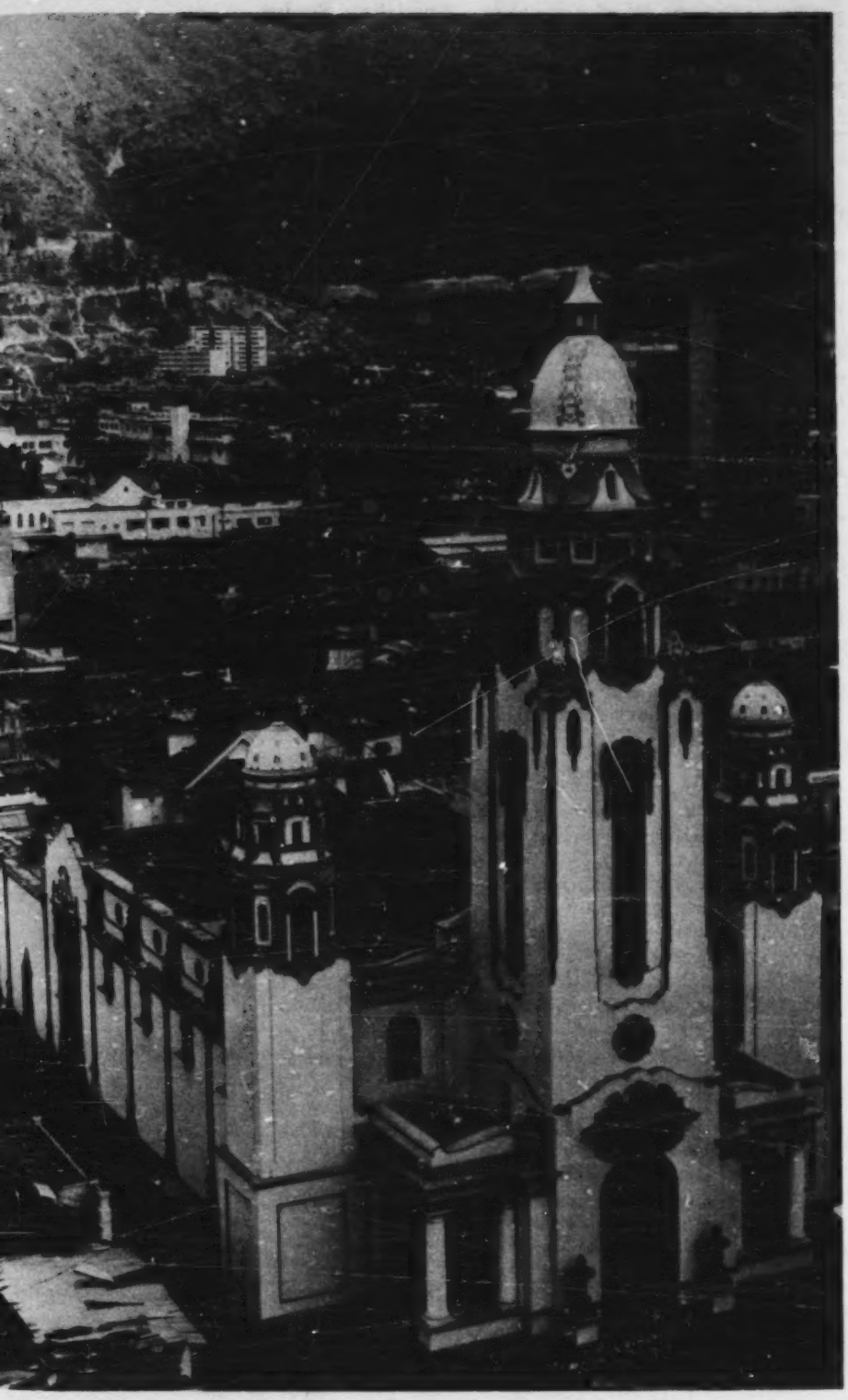
Baggage of diplomatic passport holders is not subject to inspection at any time. Venezuelan Government inspectors are authorized to open baggage of official passport holders, and they occasionally do.

Pets

All pets entering Venezuela require a health certificate, issued by a veterinarian within the last 12 months, certifying that the animal is free from infection or contagious diseases, including rabies. For pets entering from the US, this certificate must be accompanied by a letter from the US Department of Agriculture, certifying that the person signing the health certificate is a veterinarian. A Venezuelan consul must stamp and sign the health certificate (and letter, if applicable). The Venezuelan Embassy in Washington has no consular operation; the closest one for travelers originating in Washington, DC, is in Balti-

Paseo de los Ilustres.





El Panteon, a national shrine which houses Bolivar's remains.

more. These documents must accompany the pet when shipped. Clearing the animal through Venezuelan customs costs between US$2 and $10.

An exit permit is necessary to take a pet out of Venezuela. It is obtained by the Embassy from the Venezuelan Ministry of Agriculture.

FIREARMS AND AMMUNITION

To import firearms and ammunition, notify the Embassy as far in advance as possible, giving full details. Send the owner's certificates showing where and when the firearms were purchased.

On the basis of that information, the Embassy will apply for an import permit from the protocol office at the ministry of foreign affairs. Despite the existence of this procedure, the Embassy has not been successful in obtaining such permits in recent years.

Only the following firearms and ammunition may be brought to Venezuela:

- smooth-bore shotguns limited to not more than two shots, in 12, 16, 20, 30, and 410 gage;
- rifles, .22 caliber;
- automatic pistols, 6.35–7.65 mm;
- revolvers, .32 and .38 caliber.

Weapons not listed above with different size bores are considered "military" type and are prohibited; they include all automatic firing rifles, automatics, etc.

Venezuelan law requires that pistols and revolvers be packed and shipped separately for entry into Venezuela. Shotguns can be included in household effects.

CURRENCY, BANKING, AND WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

The basic Venezuelan currency unit is the bolivar (abbreviated Bs) and is divided into 100 centimos. The bolivar is a stable world currency, accepted by the International Monetary Fund as a hard currency. It is fully convertible into dollars at the present rate of Bs4.28=US$1, making the bolivar worth about 23¢. No currency black market exists in Venezuela. The exchange rate is stable.

Bills are printed in denominations

of Bs10, 20, 50, and 100. Venezuelan coins, followed by their local names, are: Bs.05 (puya o centavo); Bs.25 (medio); Bs.50 (real); Bs1.00 (Bolivar, bolo, or "B" as pronounced in English); Bs2.00 (dos Bolivares); and Bs5.00 (cinco Bolivares).

Biweekly salary and allowance checks are in dollars. Many employees have salary checks deposited directly to their US bank by the Washington Finance Center and write checks locally to cover expenses. Dollars and dollar checks may be exchanged for Venezuelan currency every weekday morning at the cashier's window in the Embassy Annex (except on the last working day of the month).

Unless you use the allotment system (in which case there is no delay in crediting your check to your account), you generally do not begin receiving checks until a month after arrival. Have sufficient money in your US account and a supply of checks to cover initial expenses. Since there is a delay in receiving quarters allowances, bring sufficient funds to cover your first month's rent, which may run up to $2,000. Temporary lodging allowance payments are received without delay at post.

Local banks with convenient branches include the First National City Bank of New York and Banco Royal Venezuela C.A. (formerly Royal Bank of Canada) for those who wish to establish local checking accounts. Personnel with US checking accounts should continue to maintain them as the most convenient method of paying obligations in the US.

The metric system is used in all local weights and measures.

TAXES, EXCHANGE, AND SALE OF PROPERTY

Regulations on the importation and disposal of personal property, including cars, are applicable to and binding upon all US Government employees. All new employees will be given a copy of the regulations when they arrive at post.

Summarized briefly, the regulations are (1) no item is to be imported for the express purpose of resale; (2) no item may be sold for more than its original purchase price; and (3) all items to be sold must first be offered to members of the US Mission in Venezuela for a period of 2 weeks and then, with prior approval of the administrative officer, may be offered for sale on the local market.

No profit is permitted on the sale of personally owned vehicles. Venezuelan duty, which is generally quite high, must be paid before the car is sold. All sales must be approved by the Administrative Section. Any money over and above the purchase price must be disposed of according to FAMC 378, dated February 1, 1966, and pertinent administrative regulations.

RECOMMENDED READING

These titles are provided as a general indication of the material published on this country. The Department of State does not endorse unofficial publications.

Information on Venezuela is available at the Pan American Union Building in Washington. Maps may be obtained from the Department of State, Office of Maps and Publications (INR/DDC/MP), Room 6845.

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LOCAL HOLIDAYS

New Year's Day	Jan. 1
Carnival	Monday and Tuesday of Carnival
Holy Week	Thursday and Good Friday
Declaration of Independence	Apr. 19
Labor Day	May 1
Independence Day	July 5
Bolivar's Birthday	July 24
Day of the Public Functionary	Sept. 24
Columbus Day	Oct. 12
Christmas Day	Dec. 25

Please arrange your arrival so that it is not on a weekend or a Venezuelan or American holiday.

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